

THE Italic Way

XXVI 1996

The magazine of the Italic Studies Institute

Italians and the Land: An Enduring Love

Edwin Tuccio
on his Long Island
bison ranch

In this Issue:
The Origins of Jazz:
A surprising story
History: The *Abyssinian War* revisited...
Roman Ireland, a secret no longer...
Ricciardi, the Italian who captured Churchill.
Italy: The birth of the republic....
Padania, what's in a name.

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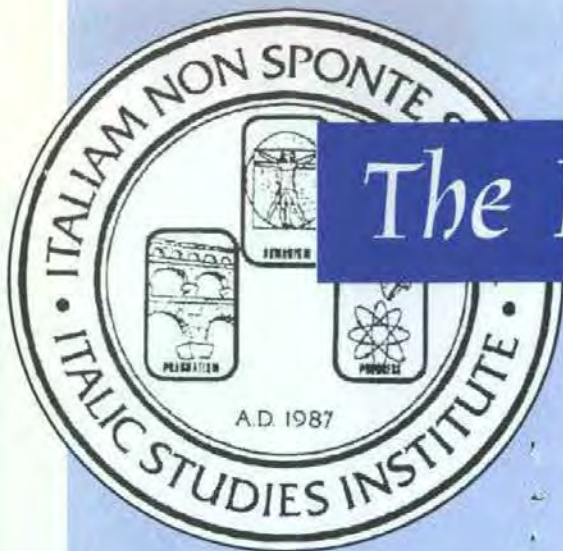
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The Italic Way

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FINDING THE INSTITUTE

I am a third-generation Italian born in America. Both my father and I take a deep interest in learning about our family history, as well as the Italian culture and the Italian immigration movement.

I read about the Institute in the Encyclopedia of Organizations. I am interested in learning more about your organization and finding out if there are membership programs for my father and me.

Thomas Santaniello
 Spartanburg, SC

Award and the commemorative coin which was awarded to Elizabeth Young. Both she and her parents were very surprised and grateful.

Sister Mary Sheridan
 Hempstead, NY

OUR FAILING IMAGE

As Italian Americans, it is vital to our future in America that we make our people aware of the fact that we are still the most maligned ethnic group in our society, and we should take steps to rectify the situation.

Donato A. Simone
 Norristown, PA

LATIN: AN ITALIC LANGUAGE

I was very proud to receive recognition from your organization for my study of Latin. I have now finished my seventh year of Latin, and in that time I have developed a keen interest in Roman history. I will continue to study Roman culture and linguistics. Please tell me how I may become involved.

Terence H. McGuire
 New Hyde Park, NY

The following letter was printed in *The New York Times* (10/19/96)

Dear Editor:

An Oct. 14 news article quotes Elias Illescas, an organizer of the Hispanic Columbus Day Parade, as calling the discovery of America "a thoroughly Spanish event" and saying "Italy had nothing to do with it."

I thank you for the Latin Language

Continued on page 3



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DESMOND J. BURKE



Letters

Continued from page 1

The Iberian-American historian German Arciniegas clearly states, "The discovery of America was in part an Italian enterprise" (*Amerigo and the New World*). The author notes that Christopher Columbus was born in Genoa, Italy, and that the inspirations of his life were the ancient Roman scholar Seneca, an Italian born in Roman Spain, who foretold a new world, and Marco Polo, the Venetian traveler to China.

To de-Italianize the discovery of America not only insults the Italic people but it is a gross distortion of history.

John Mancini
Italic Studies Institute
Floral Park, NY

[Ed. We were fortunate to have this letter printed in the NY Times, however, the Times cut out half of it. The other half detailed the co-funding of Columbus' voyage by Italian merchants. The full facts are contained in our Focus article in the Spring, 1992 issue of *The Italic Way*.)

The following letter was printed in *The Wall Street Journal* [9/17/96]

Dear Editor:

Though the sun has set on the British empire, perfidious Albion lives on in the pages of *The Wall Street Journal*.

Your Sept. 5 editorial "Olivetti's Lesson" was typically Anglo-Saxon in its supercilious critique of Italian corporate governance. While Carlo De Benedetti's uneven performance as Olivetti Chairman certainly merits closer scrutiny, your article's haughty tone was unwarranted and outrageously Italophobic. Rather than belittling Italian business practices, you should examine the hollowness at the core of Anglo-Saxon corporations.

In a BBC interview with David Frost, Barings Bank bad boy Nick Leeson highlighted the sheer stupidity that led to his corporate cupidity: "A couple of people who were in core places and should have been administering a high level of control had almost no understanding of the fundamentals of the business that they were supposed to be controlling."

The 900-million-pound collapse of one of Britain's most venerable financial houses revealed an utter lack of organizational accountability, ethics and rules of remuneration. Although half of Baring's earnings came

from speculative ventures, there were no systems of restraint or oversight managers to gauge risks. Like so many British institutions, Baring's Bank hid behind a facade of urbanity, unflappability and pluck. Britons repeatedly have relied on this benign image to mask corporate and national shortcomings. However, England's economic decline during the past two decades belies the illusion. For every Oxford don there are five unemployed cockney hooligans; for every John Maynard Keynes there are 10 Nicky Leesons.

Contrary to popular opinion, Italians are quite serious about reforming their institutions. The *tangentopoli* trials forever altered Italy's business and political landscape. Led by Antonio Di Pietro, Italian magistrates threw out the postwar rascals who had fostered corruption. Britain merely pays stiff-upper-lip service to institutional reform. When it comes to financial chicanery, the Anglo-Saxon world is where the money is. Or maybe British corporations have just succumbed to mad cash-cow disease.

Italy's *sorpasso* of Britain in the 1980s stunned the English. That their "sceptered isle" was economically overtaken by a "nation of waiters" still rankles the Brits. That the average Italian earns and saves more money than the average Briton only serves to heighten English insecurity. And now that the Iron lady is gone and bumbling John Major lurches from crisis to crisis, the Anglo-Saxons are in a tizzy. Throw in brain-addled bovines, squabbles with the European Monetary

Union and the bawdy behavior of Fergie, Di and Prince Charles, and the future seems bleak for John Bull.

Anglo-Saxons, Anglophiles and *Journal* editorial writers would be wise to remember that Britain owes its very existence as a nation-state to the Italians. Prior to Caesar and company, Britain was neither a "realm" nor a "blessed plot." It was a backwater in the frigid North Atlantic, far from the classical shores of the Mediterranean. After the Claudian conquest, Britain prospered as part of Italy's Roman Empire. Across majestic roads and in magnificent villas, from Londinium to Lombard street, England was thoroughly Italianized. From bathing and banking to language, statecraft and law, Italians brought civilization to Britain and left a legacy that represents the saving grace of Anglo-Saxon society.

Rosario A. Iaconis
Franklin Square, NY

[Ed. This letter received accolades from the Italian Consulate. Although defending Italy and Italian-Americans has reached new depths of apathy, the Institute is in the forefront of fighting media propaganda whether in print or on the silver screen.]

Please address all letters to:

Letters

The Italic Way

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Future Issues of *The Italic Way*

The Italic Family- Then and Now
Italians- Architects to the World
Italian Debt- What Italy Owes Italian-Americans
Politics- Is There An Italic Agenda?





WORLD NOTES

Marco Phoney?

Revising history is *ye old English* tradition. After all, how many people know that the Brits took Hong Kong in a drug war with the Chinese?

A new book written by the head of the Chinese section of the British Library is calling into question Marco Polo's travels to China. The author, Frances Wood, came to that conclusion, among others, because Polo never mentioned seeing the Great Wall of China.

And why is there no reference to Polo in extant Chinese documents? Perhaps Marco Polo wasn't a major news item among the Chinese. Ms. Wood may well ask why there is no reference to the Exodus in Egyptian records. Maybe such proofs will appear centuries from now.

Better historians than Ms. Wood have acknowledged Polo's feat. British soldier-scholar Sir Henry Yule published his opinion in 1871 after having examined all versions of Polo's account and actually retracing Polo's route across Asia. Yule concluded that Marco Polo was to be believed.

If there is anything questionable about Marco Polo's tales it is that he introduced pasta to the Italians.



DOLE'S ANGEL

Although presidential candidate Bob Dole (*pictured*) lost his campaign for the White House, he had the opportunity thanks to a man named Frank Carafa. It was Carafa, then a platoon sergeant in the 10th Mountain Division, who dragged the severely wounded Lt. Bob Dole to safety and medical attention during a battle in northern Italy. The year was 1945. Like so many other Italian-Americans (over 500,000 served in WW II) Carafa served even while thousands of his fellow ethnics in the United States were persecuted for being Italian, an enemy people.

During the election campaign Bob Dole was honored to introduce Frank Carafa to his audience as the man who saved his life.



North Pole Flap

The history books tell us that American explorer Richard Byrd was the first to reach the North Pole by air in 1926. Byrd flew the distance from Kings Bay, Norway, and back in nearly 16 hours. At least this is what Byrd told the world at the time.

But wait! There are some questions now about Byrd's veracity in recording his proximity to the Pole. Baltimore scholar Dennis Rawlins estimates that Byrd ended his historic flight about 150 miles short of his goal. Suspiciously, Byrd and his co-pilot failed to drop any flags at the Pole as they had planned. Considering that Byrd claimed they spent 13 minutes circling the spot the oversight smacks a little of Anglo skullduggery.

Rawlins also noted that Byrd's logbook had been erased on a crucial page but one could discern some inconsistent numbers. Rawlins suggests that Byrd turned around short of the Pole because his airplane engine had an oil leak.

So, if Byrd wasn't the first to fly to the North Pole who was? That honor would go to Italian aviator/explorer Umberto Nobile (*pictured*) who with Norwegian Roald Amundsen and American Lincoln Ellsworth passed over the Pole in an Italian dirigible. But even this expedition was not without political problems. It seems that Amundsen assembled the team, choosing to leave the technical matters in Italian hands. However, Nobile was not a second fiddle to anyone and he made sure that of the three flags dropped over the Pole the largest one was Italy's.





TORRE, TORRE, TORRE

History will record that the 1996 baseball season was one of the most glorious campaigns in the storied saga of the New York Yankees. Rising phoenix-like from the ashes of two devastating defeats at home, the gritty Bronx Bombers swept the next four games from the astonished Atlanta Braves to win their 23rd World Series Title. Displaying the resiliency of their skipper, Joe Torre, the Yankees triumphed in adversity throughout the postseason to beat the Texas Rangers, Baltimore Orioles and, finally, Ted Turner's modern-day cowhide Confederates. One of the key reasons that the New York Yankees have had such a winning tradition is the roll call of Italo-American baseball legends to wear

the hallowed pinstripes: Joe DiMaggio, Tony Lazzeri, Yogi Berra, Phil Rizzuto, Billy Martin, Vic Raschi, Dave Righetti and, now, Joe Torre.

And as if one sports surprise weren't enough, the results of the New York Marathon one week after the World Series came as quite a shock to the forecasters. First place went to Italian policeman Giacomo Leone who managed to cross the finish line in 2 hours, 9 minutes and 54 seconds without even mussing his pompadour. Among the women, Italian Franca Fiacconi came in second a mere 24 seconds behind the winner. For the record, Italians last won the Marathon in 1986 (Gianni Poli) and before that in 1984 and 1985 (Orlando Pizzolato won both years).

Keeping The Peace

Among the nations attempting to prevent another bloodbath in Bosnia is



Italy, which has joined its NATO allies in that Balkan nation. Troops of the crack 8th Bersagliere ("sharpshooter") Regiment have been assigned one of the most sensitive sectors of Sarajevo. Each soldier, many with elite paratrooper training, proudly wears the traditional black cock feathers in his helmet and is armed with Beretta folding-stock carbines fitted with sound suppressor and laser aiming designator. As peacekeepers, the Bersaglieri are disciplined enough to police their sector without resort to bloodshed. Their first mission was to prevent Serbs from burning down buildings that were to be turned over to Bosnians as part of the armistice accord. Many of the men derive experience from combating Mafia terrorists in Sicily.

Yasir's Friends

The Latin cousins, Italy and France, have been exhibiting a decidedly pro-Arab bent of late. In a whirlwind tour of Israel, Syria, Jordan and Palestine, French President Jacques Chirac set the Middle East on its ear. France's head of state called for an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. He also demanded that Israel return the Golan Heights to Syria and end its incursions into Lebanon. Yasir Arafat hailed the visit as an advancement of the peace process. Meanwhile, in Rome, Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini greeted Arafat with a fond embrace.

Although overshadowed by U.S. diplomatic coups over the past ten years, Italy and France sincerely believe they are the most honest brokers in a Mideast settlement. The United States, they believe, is overcommitted to the Israeli point of view. And they remember well their sacrifices in Lebanon in 1982 as part of the multi-national peace-keeping force.



Sea Monster

Carnival Cruise Line set out to own the largest cruise ship ever to sail the seas. The dream came true with the technical know-how of Italy's premiere ship-builders. At a record-breaking 100,000 tons, the Carnival Destiny is bigger than the QEII (66,000 tons) or any other cruise ship afloat. Even the "huge" Titanic displaced only 46,000 tons.

An Olympic High

As usual, Italy placed among the top ten nations in the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta.

With a total medal count of 35 (13 of them gold) the Italians out-ranked such competitors as Canada (22 total medals), Spain (17), Britain (16), Japan (14).

Italian athletes excelled in kayaking, cycling, fencing, and shooting.

Voting Italian Style

When all the votes are tallied among the world's democracies, one nation stands above the rest—Italy, yes, Italy. Whereas America's Democrats and Republicans cannot abide a strong third party and won't allow its standard-bearer into the Presidential debates, Italy provides its populace with diversity at the polls. Whereas Israeli politics has fallen into zealotry and assassination, the Italian electoral process fosters amity and compromise. Whereas Russia remains an unstable and crime-ridden neo-democratic state, Italy, for all its multiplicity of parties, is the model of stability. Whereas Japan's government works hand-in-hand with the criminal Yakuza, Italy's heroic magistrates fight the Mafia and malfeasance to the death. Whereas Spain's secret government sends out death squads to hound the Basques, Italy has granted special rights to its German-speaking Alpine region. In the 1994 elections, 85 percent of Italians voted. In our own recent Presidential elections, only 49 percent, less than a majority, of eligible American voters went to the polls. For the President of Russia, 67 percent of eligible voters cast their ballots. The numbers speak for themselves. Could Italy be the only real democracy among all of these?



EDITORIALS

Fatalism and Ethnic Degradation

Have the leaders of the National Italian American Foundation (NIAF) and the Order Sons of Italy in America (OSIA) taken leave of their senses? Have the hierarchies of two of America's most respected ethnic organizations fallen victim to the notorious fatalism that afflicts so many of our brethren? By tying their good names to the questionable antics of Hollywood's Chazz Palminteri and Tony Lo Bianco, respectively, they have not only waved the flag of surrender but legitimized the ethnic degradation we are all supposedly fighting.

The very first question that comes to mind is: Did any of these leaders actually view Palminteri's *A Bronx Tale* and Lo Bianco's *The Juro?* If they had, this editorial would be unnecessary. With their lurid portrayals of our community, these films are not the stuff of ethnic pride. The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith would never accept ethnic media prostitution as the price of selling dinner tickets. If we do so then what is our purpose in life?

Both the Order Sons of Italy and the National Italian-American Foundation have media awareness committees. What were their reactions to the choice of honorees? Are Puzo and Coppola waiting in the wings?

The Italic Studies Institute is to be commended for resisting Tony Lo Bianco's attempt to be on the ISI dais last May in its celebration of film and stage director Franco Zeffirelli's lifetime achievements. Although Lo Bianco was once the darling of ISI for his professed aversion to mafioso roles, he like many of his ilk, actively sought out mobster parts even to the point of attending the John Gotti trial and mugging for the tabloids. A guy's gotta do

While we trudge to work each day to earn our bread and spend countless hours at night trying to elevate our fellow ethnics, people like Palminteri, Puzo, Coppola, Aiello, and Lo Bianco hotly sell their ethnicity, no, OUR ethnicity, for whatever the traffic will bear.

Where once the Roman spirit prevailed now dwells the fatalism beaten into us by the Spanish Bourbon occupation. Have we stooped so low as a people that we honor those we once swore to oppose, those who denigrate our history and our heritage, those who perpetuate the prejudice that imperils our civil liberties, those who will condemn our children to ethnic shame, those who prostitute our culture while we struggle to preserve its dignity? Is this the best that 15 million Italian-Americans and 3,000 years of Etrusco-Italic civilization can produce? Have we so little self-respect that we exalt the architects of our demise? Are we so steeped in self-loathing that we are willing to let evil triumph?

- ROSARIO A. IACONIS

Political Impotence

Back in the 1980's *The New York Times* proclaimed the decade belonged to Italian-Americans, citing Mario Cuomo and a number of other notables as proof of our political ascendancy. But before we celebrate our significant presence in today's political arena just remember that before there was a Giuliani there was a La Guardia, an Alioto, a Celeste, a Grasso, a Civiletti, a Celebrese, a Califano, a Volpe. These were governors, cabinet members, and mayors. It is hard to say if we have made any real progress, politically, since the middle of this century. And what is the good of capturing political offices if our politicians lack an ethnic agenda?

Can anybody list the things we need as an ethnic group? We don't believe anybody has such a list. It is not enough to just vote for people who have Italian names. We need to extract a commitment from them.

Witness the funding quest we are currently pursuing in Congress. ISI wants the U. S. Government to own up to their 1942 persecution of Italian-Americans. Yet, with about twenty-five Italic members of Congress including some of the biggest guns in the Senate, we have yet to receive a nickel for a documentary on 1942. Contrast this with the effectiveness of only three Japanese-American legislators who managed to obtain \$1.2 billion in reparations, \$50 million in education funding, as well as numerous other pet projects. Or look in wonder at the work of two Jewish senators (Specter and Boxer) who singlehandedly managed to squeeze \$1 million from the crisis budget this year to give to filmmaker Steven Spielberg for his Holocaust documentary. And how about the Irish contingent who, have managed to increase Irish immigration quotas, select an ambassador to Ireland, and have brought the IRA in triumph to Washington. By comparison, our team is still warming the bench and watching the ball.

Our team talks about tax cuts, cutting welfare and all the other generic platitudes while Blacks, Hispanics, Chinese, and others are working on their agendas. It is high time that someone writes our agenda and issues the wake-up call.

Who is better equipped for this than our own Advisory Council?

- JOHN L. MANCINI

Forum of the People

Senator D'Amato Reverses Course

In our last issue we reported how our request for government funding of a documentary concerning the persecution of Italian-Americans during the Second World War was being treated. New York's Senator Alfonse D'Amato and his staff, at first, responded very coldly making reference to the budget crisis and how our request—that the federal government spend less than a million dollars to right a wrong—would burden future generations, etc., etc.

Coming from such a powerful senator who takes obvious pride in his roots, this brush off was a shock to us. Nevertheless, we did some more homework to accomplish our mission. Lo and behold, John Krollpfeiffer, our Washington, DC mentor and project

director for this documentary surfed the Internet and the newspapers to discover some amazing facts about Congressional budget "problems". With a tip from Bill Dal Cerro of the Midwest Council John found an article in the Washington Times (7/24/96) reporting a \$1 million grant to Steven Spielberg for his Holocaust project from the "financially strapped" Congress. (The newspaper clip is reproduced here.)

After discovering how the grant was made we contacted Senator D'Amato's staff. They were as shocked as we. As a result, the senator submitted a request to the subcommittee on education, headed by Sen. Arlen Specter who had just arranged the Spielberg grant. (Sen. D'Amato's letter is reprinted here.)

Congressional appropriations were legislated in October. Our project did not make the short list. We are now requesting a direct meeting with Senator D'Amato to push for the next appropriation cycle in the Spring of 1997. Stay tuned.

As printed in the Washington Times, 7/24/96

Spielberg given grant for Holocaust project

Two Jewish senators have lent government backing to Steven Spielberg's Holocaust documentation project, presenting the Hollywood director with a \$1 million federal grant yesterday.

Mr. Spielberg said the funding will allow him to approach Germany, Austria and other governments for additional grants to create a living history of the Holocaust through interviews with more than 50,000 survivors. He said the information will be available to museums and schools "to teach teachers to teach tolerance."

Sen. Arlen Specter, Pennsylvania Republican and a Senate Appropriations Committee member, pushed for the grant with Sen. Barbara Boxer, California Democrat.

ALFONSE M. D'AMATO
NEW YORK

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3202

August 20, 1996

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Chairman, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and
Human Services, and Education
184 Senate Dirksen Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-6034

Dear Arlen:

I am writing to urge your support for funding an innovative historical project that will document the treatment of Italian-Americans during World War II in the United States. The Subcommittee has jurisdiction over this matter, as indicated by the recent funding of an invaluable project to be produced by Steven Spielberg.

Congress has indicated the need to research and document the persecution of Americans during World War II by our own government. Funds are intended to be set aside for the research of Asian-Americans who were subject to the horror of internment in the United State. I am now asking that funds also be allocated to document the relocation of Italian-Americans during the Second World War.

It is clear that the actions by the U.S. government must never occur again in this country, a nation that is traditionally known for its freedoms. In order to ensure that this horror is never repeated, the events that transpired must be documented for future generations.

An association in New York State, the Italic Studies Institute, has suggested that it will cost \$750,000 to produce a first ever public broadcast film to document the internment of Italian-Americans. Treating Italian-Americans as enemies of the country during the 1940's, the government restricted their movement. The details and the events that transpired must be told, to this generation and to every one that follows. Historical documentation is limited now and each year that passes leads to less available data.

I hope that you will be able to fund this project with the same zeal in which you have funded other similar projects. Thank you for your consideration of this request. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff member, Gila Zawadzki.

Sincerely,

Alfonse M. D'Amato
United States Senator



Italians and the Land

An Enduring Love

by John Mancini

By day he is a real estate broker, by night a bison rancher. Edwin Tuccio just loves bison, those wooly mammoths that once darkened the vast prairies of the American West and provided Native Americans with food, clothing and shelter all wrapped in a two thousand pound package. For Tuccio, a native Long Islander and third generation Italian-American, raising these horned critters east of the Hudson River has been a life-long dream. The American bison has made its mark on Tuccio from his small herd admired in wonder by every passerby, to the bison boots he proudly wears.

We are used to thinking of Italians and their descendants in the United States as an urban people, attached more to row houses than corn rows. Somehow it is difficult to conjure up an Italic farmstead out in the middle of Iowa where human contact is dependent on a weekly ride to town in a pickup truck. Perhaps the Italic psyche rebels against such isolation. It may not be surprising, then, that in Italy it is not uncommon for farmers to live in town and commute to the land that provides their livelihood. It is the same sort of logic one can apply to the fisherman who would never consider living at sea. Towns and villages provide security, convenience, and human contact.

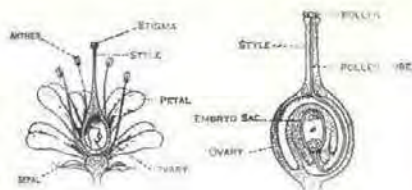
Urban though they be, even in the midst of urban sprawl there is still the urge among Italics to commune with the good earth. We all know what miracles the "old-timers" produced from small patches of dirt in the irregular plots behind their row houses— enough tomatoes to jar for the winter, basil for pesto, parsley, peppers, grapes, and the myriad other staples of the Italian garden.

Italians have had a special genius for agriculture. In their quest for the finest food they naturally sought freshness and quality from the seed on up. The will to control nature was as least as strong as the ancient Italian desire to control other men. While the ancient Hellenes (Greeks) dabbled in the abstract sciences the Romans excelled in such

pursuits as the agricultural sciences and hydraulics. It was classical Italy that introduced Western Europe to the peach, cherry, wine grape, plum, filbert, and walnut. The principles of soil conservation, crop rotation, animal breeding and greenhouses evolved to high levels in classical Italy. In our own era broccoli, broccoli raab, and zucchini were developed in Italy and the eggplant elevated to manna. And, of course, who would deny that the Italians have put the tomato to its greatest use?

The fine Italian hand extends to animal breeding as well. The Leghorn chicken, developed in Livorno on the peninsula's western coast, is one of the most common layers today. This Mediterranean class fowl produces most of America's white eggs. Even the honey we consume is mainly a product of Italian honey bees, a breed that is rated superior for gentleness, disease resistance, and productivity. These ancient insects no doubt evolved from Etruscan and Roman ancestors. Today's beekeepers fear that the Italian bee stock may be threatened by the Africanized "killer" bee.

It was the Italian botanist Prospero Alpini who, in the 16th Century,



The secret sex life of plants was discovered by the Italian botanist Alpini



Italian Honey Bee: Prolific producer



The Leghorn (Livorno): Champion egg-layer



An Italian family from Calabria crossed cauliflower with raab in the 19th Century and gave it the family name: broccoli.

Continued on page 13

deduced the doctrine of sexual reproduction in plants. Prior to Alpini it appears that no one thought of plants as having sexual "encounters." Alpini finally came to his plant sex theory while stationed in Egypt as a foreign consul. Observing date palms he noted that there was no fruit produced unless male and female palms mixed. Alpini's revolutionary theory gave birth to the whole classification system for plants later devised by

*That we eat
more fruits and
vegetables, that we
enjoy a good table wine
has much to do
with the Italic influence.*

the Dutchman Linnaeus. Indeed, those exotic Latin names that horticulturalists spout in identifying your garden shrubs bear witness to Italic roots (no pun intended).

The whole system of measuring farmland, transferring titles, and delineating public domain can be traced to Roman agrarian laws. As the world's greatest lawyers and engineers the ancient Italians saw the land as a commodity that was subject to the law and to state control. Land surveys, irrigation rights, and public vs. private holdings were codified to a highly sophisticated degree. The Roman State often distributed lands in Italy to army veterans. It is more than just probable that Italian-Americans who hail from the various parts of Italy are descendants of Roman veterans who were granted farmsteads in all the hinterlands of the peninsula and Sicily. It was, in good part, the struggle for land rights that precipitated the Italian civil war (The Social War) around 90 B.C. The Romans and their Italian allies fought each other to a standstill that eventually completed the social and economic unification of Italy. In essence, the love of land brought us all together.

The Italian love affair with the land can be traced to the climate and geography of the peninsula. Although the Italian landmass is comparable to our states of Georgia and Florida combined, only about 40% can be used for planting. Yet, because of its mild climate Italian farmers are able to produce multiple crops each year. "Here is eternal

spring," sang the Latin poet Virgil, "and summer even in months not her own. Twice in the year the cattle breed, twice the trees serve us with fruit." The quest for arable land has driven Italians to drain marshlands and even to cultivate the threatening slopes of Vesuvius in defiance of nature.

It is not unexpected, then, that Italians see the world as a potential source of food production. The agricultural giant Gruppo Ferruzzi has vast holding of farmlands in such far away places as Brazil, Argentina and Australia. These foreign fields produce the grains that become pasta, polenta, and animal feed for Italian use and export. Just as ancient Egypt was Rome's granary so now Italy depends on its global farm colonies.

Little can compare to the success of Italic agriculture right here in the USA. From the truck farms of Vineland, New Jersey, to the development of entire food industries in California, the Italic contributions to food production are astounding. Products we take for granted — wine, vegetables, fruit, mushrooms, and peanuts — all have an Italian-American story behind them.

The Italian presence in American agriculture dates back to 1619 when colonist Albiano Lupo settled on 400 acres of land purchased from the Virginia Company. He, like so many Italian families, arrived in colonial America by way of England. In Maryland, one of the earliest and most famous of these Italo-English landowners was William Paca (PAY'-cab), a signer of the Declaration of Independence. The Tagliaferro (aka Tolliver) clan was also among the great plantation owners of the South. One of the most influential farmers in the colonies was Italian emigre Philip Mazzei who not only introduced European viniculture to Virginia but was a political confidant of Thomas Jefferson.

By far the most impressive contributions of Italian immigrants came in the 19th Century.

The team of Andrea Sbarbaro and Pietro Rossi led in the development of the California wine industry. Their company, Italian Swiss Colony, was the model for the industry. Sbarbaro's purchase in the



The brothers Gallo, pioneers of mass production



This Roman coin commemorates the Alim(enta) Ital(ica), a system of agricultural loans whose interest payments subsidized Italian children. It was a farm support program with a conscience.

1880's of fertile land in the Sonoma Valley north of San Francisco began a collaboration that has given America an impressive array of world-class wines. With Rossi bringing the latest French scientific techniques to the fermentation and aging process, Italian Swiss Colony earned the respect of European vintners. Thereafter, it was the genius of the Gallo brothers, Ernest and Giulio, that developed the mass production of California wines, typically 300 million gallons per year. Other Italian-Americans like Robert Mondavi and August Sebastiani produce and market fine wines proudly bearing their names.

Grapes were just one of the fruits Giuseppe and Rosario DiGiorgio supplied to American consumers. Plums, pears, oranges, and grapefruit are still mass produced by the DiGiorgio Fruit Corp on some 40,000 acres of California and Florida farms. DiGiorgio broke the grip of such monopolies as United Fruit Company when it created an entirely new vertical combination of farms, canning (under the S & W label), sales and shipping companies. S & W is probably one of the largest packer of canned goods in the world. DiGiorgio even has land holdings in Mexico and many parts of South America. Supermarkets wouldn't be the same without the production and distribution systems established by these pioneer immigrants from Sicily.

And let us not forget that the Del Monte label was the brain-child of immigrants Marco Fontana and Antonio Cerruti in 1891. The full name of the company was Marca del Monte (Mountain Brand).

Anyone who appreciates mushrooms as a meal in themselves or as a complement to the other food groups should pay homage to

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Is Italy Going to Split?

The mythical land of Padania
(aka north Italy)

Italians love vacations, and the month of August comes each year as a reprieve to the populace of the *bel paese*. Tired of the gray days of the long winter, our fellow citizens plan their summer sojourns as a form of escape: the seashore or the hilltops, lots of good food, and few commitments. The newspapers and the TV newscasts seem to adapt to the lazy mood of the hordes of vacationers, and suspend for a month the usual whining about inflation, institutional reform, and interparty haggling. Into this information gap has come the only man capable of transforming monotonous debate into some real political melodrama. To his fellow nationals stretched out on beaches with time to kill he is a dependable source of amused interest. He is Umberto Bossi, leader of the Northern League.

For at least two weeks during the most torrid days of this atypical summer (it hasn't rained so much in years), Bossi wanted his Ponte di Legno vacation to be the focus of some wild theatrics. The major newspapers of the country have taken the bait, headlining almost every day the boastings of the chief of the *Carroccio*. But why this sudden spectacle? For years Bossi wanted federalism for Italy. But since his League has had enough votes in Parliament to destabilize the center-right Berlusconi government first, and to challenge the mandate of the center-left Prodi government now, the word "federalism" has found its way into nearly every party

platform. In short, Bossi's single issue has become a non-issue. So, with his slogan compromised, Uber-Bossi has wisely adjusted his position: *viola* we want secession!

Let's elucidate. Italy's Prime Minister Romano Prodi plans to somehow push forward a vague form of federalism. By itself, that would mean that the Northern League has reached one of its principal objectives. Unfortunately, it is common knowledge that the promises contained in a government program are worth, more or less, as much as the personal opinions of a Prime Minister who is constantly tossed around and blackmailed by the Re-founded Communist Party, and the secretary of the Democratic Party of The Left, D'Alema. In other words: no federalism, it was just a little gimmick to gain votes. This, of course, was certainly understood by millions of jaded Italian voters, and certainly by the ill-tempered Umberto Bossi. To counteract this facade of federalism he



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Italians and The Land

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Francesco DeSantis who pioneered the mushroom industry in America between the world wars. The DeSantis family still oversees the processing and distribution of more than two million pounds of mushrooms per year from caves and growing houses throughout eastern Pennsylvania. Elsewhere in Pennsylvania and across the country Italian-American families produce an appreciable part of the mushroom varieties consumed in the United States, including the Portabello which originated in, where else, Italy.

The man who made the lowly peanut a versatile crop was the African-American scientist George Washington Carver but it was an Italian immigrant, Amadeo Obici, who transformed it into an American passion. The famous goober of Civil War fame ("peas, peas, eating goober peas...") was a staple snack in the south, usually sold in the shell. But peanut farmers like former President Jimmy Carter owe their agribusiness success to Obici's marketing skills. Having arrived at our shores at the tender age of twelve, Obici

learned the importance of a volume business. Relieving customers of their nickels was



Mr. Peanut,
mascot of
Amadeo Obici's
Planters
Peanut Empire

easier than taking their dollars. So, in 1897 this young man purchased a peanut roaster, customized it with an electric mixing blade to prevent scorching the nuts, and proceeded to sell five-cent bags of shelled peanuts. In 1906 he formed the Planters Peanut Company. By 1930 the United States produced 4 million sacks of peanuts, 90% of which were used by Planters to manufacture roasted peanuts, salted nuts, peanut butter, and chocolate bars. Along the way, Obici developed the symbol of the American goober — Mr. Peanut — complete with top hat and spats.

Ingenuity, hardwork, and devotion to the good earth have been the hallmarks of Italic farmers and food processors. Their existence has been overshadowed by their urban cousins but their contributions should never

be minimized. Just as pizzerias and Italian restaurants have converted America's eating habits over the century, Italic vineyards, farms, and breeding developments have given the American diet a boost toward a healthier lifespan. That we eat more fruits and vegetables, that we enjoy a good table wine has much to do with the Italic influence. Owning the land was always synonymous with working the land. It is not surprising, then, to learn that some two million acres of Mississippi Delta land were brought under cultivation by immigrant Italian farmers. The Anglo founder of Vineland, New Jersey, once wrote of Italian immigrant farmers, "What would I do without the Italians? They buy [land] to stay. They make homes not alone for themselves but for every member of their families."

Whether they own vast acres in the West or merely a small urban plot in Brooklyn, there is an enduring love for the land. For the land represents the means to produce. It allows the ever-pragmatic Italic soul to express itself and to be rewarded with the fruits of his labor.



Lake Tana and the Abyssinian War

By Alfred Cardone

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of Fascist Italy's conquest of Ethiopia. Most history books date the origins of the Second World War from this event. Although this is debatable, the war was a major international crisis that pitted the determination and patriotism of the Italian people against the British and French dominated League of Nations. Unquestionably, the Italians waged an imperialist war. The irony was that Britain and France, and even the United States, were guilty of the same sort of imperialism over the preceding decades. However, Britain's reaction in particular has never been adequately explained. On the face of it, His Majesty's Government played the role of a righteous defender of Ethiopian independence. But there was a deeper, more pragmatic, reason for Britain's willingness to lock horns with a resurgent Italy. For situated in the highlands of northwestern Abyssinia was Lake Tana, source of the Blue Nile. He who controlled Lake Tana could very well control the Nile and the fate of British-occupied Egypt and Sudan.

Stormy Relations

Italy's conflict with Ethiopia began shortly after the Italian occupation of Assab and Massawa on the Red Sea. Ethiopia also claimed Massawa, and in 1887, an army of ten thousand Ethiopians attacked and overwhelmed an Italian force of five hundred men at Dogali.

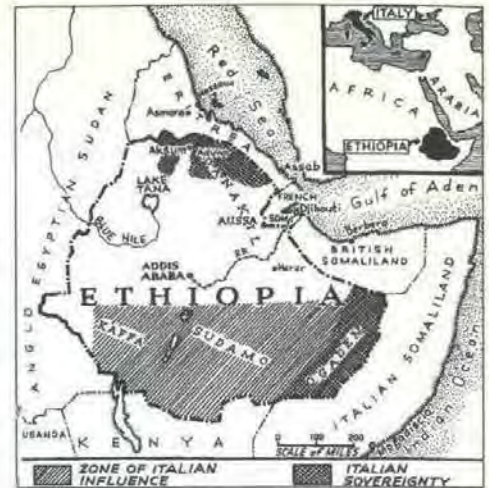
This proved to be the beginning of a long and troubled relationship.

A shaky peace was concluded with Ethiopia's new emperor, Menelik, in 1889. The following year, on January 1, 1890, Italy's possessions on

the Red Sea were united into the colony of Eritrea. Within a few years, however, tensions again flared, and Menelik denounced the treaty with Italy. Both sides prepared for war. On March 1, 1896, an Italian force of about eighteen thousand met a huge Ethiopian army of one hundred thousand men at Adowa and was defeated. This disastrous battle stunned Italy and shocked the adolescent Benito Mussolini. Revenge for the "shameful scar" of Adowa, as Gabriele D'Annunzio was later to call it, became a persistent theme of Italian foreign policy.

During the First World War, Italy was presented an opportunity to expand its control over East Africa by the terms of the 1915 Treaty of London. Article 13 of this treaty provided that if Britain and France should increase their African colonies at Germany's expense, Italy should be granted a corresponding and equitable increase in its East African territories. Following the war, Italy's efforts to capitalize on this clause of the 1915 treaty were blocked by its allies. Without consulting the Italians, the British and the French carved up Germany's colonies into "mandates" for themselves, giving Italy nothing in Africa.

At this time, Great Britain began to show signs of attempting to penetrate Ethiopia both politically and economically. A segment of the British press even launched a campaign sug-



gesting that Ethiopia be granted as a mandate to Britain. It was for this reason that Italy, in order to avoid the possible establishment of a British protectorate, supported Ethiopia's application for admission to the League of Nations in 1923. Ethiopia was granted membership on the condition that it abolish slavery and respect all international agreements on the control of arms traffic. As it turned out, Ethiopia failed to honor either of these conditions.

A Brutal Empire

The internal conditions in Ethiopia were so chaotic that there was little chance of compliance with the League's requirements. Ethiopia was not a unified and organized nation-state. The Amharic minority, led by Emperor Menelik, had brutally conquered neighboring lands to carve out the modern boundaries of Ethiopia. In the process, entire regions were depopulated. The survivors of these different religious and ethnic groups were held as oppressed or enslaved subjects. In the early

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Lake Tana



*Il Duce reviews his
Ethiopian Fascists*

1930's, the number of slaves was estimated to be approximately two million in a population of ten million. One out of every

five inhabitants lived in horrific slavery. This practice of widespread slavery and slave trading was a flagrant violation of the League of Nations Covenant.

In November 1930, Haile Selassie became emperor of a country that was actually comprised of many and often very antagonistic groups. It was a kind of feudal society plagued by racial, religious and regional divisions. Conditions throughout Ethiopia were appalling, without even the most rudimentary forms of sanitation. Poverty, disease, malnutrition and starvation only served to intensify the suspicion and hostility with which the subject peoples viewed Selassie's Amharic central government. The results were predictable. There were frequent rebellions in the provinces which were suppressed with the greatest brutality. There were also frequent raids by the Ethiopians along the borders of Eritrea and Italian Somaliland with the purpose of capturing and enslaving natives. Ethiopia also began to reorganize its army in 1929 with the aid of European instructors, and in 1930 began importing large amounts of modern war material from Europe.

These border violations and the increasing military threat which Ethiopia posed for Italy's colonies began to draw Mussolini's serious attention. In November 1934, a large Ethiopian force suddenly approached the Italian frontier post at Wal-Wal in

The Maffey Commission concluded that Britain should strive to secure territorial control over Lake Tana

a border area between Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland which had been under Italian rule for many years. On the night of December 4, 1934, the Ethiopians attacked the native garrison at Wal-Wal but were beaten back after heavy fighting.

This attack and the continuation of frontier raids by irregular and even regular Ethiopian forces on Italian colonial territory convinced Mussolini that the time had come for decisive action. Considering the rise of Hitler in Europe, Italy could not afford to have a mounting threat to its colonies in East Africa go unanswered for very long. Mussolini realized that Germany would soon rearm and become a threat to the peace of Europe. The Duce had already stopped Hitler, single-handedly, from taking over Austria earlier in the year. He reasoned, therefore, that he could not afford to delay and must strike at Ethiopia while Europe was still relatively quiet.

Mussolini moved quickly to secure the approval of France and Britain. He reached an agreement with Premier Pierre Laval of

*The American
Ambassador to
Ethiopia (in fedora)
with geologists
exploring the Lake
Tana region*



France in January 1935. In exchange for a free hand in Ethiopia, Mussolini

agreed to the gradual elimination of special Italian minority rights in French Tunisia. The British, however, were not in a bargaining mood.

Lake Tana at Risk

In January 1935, Mussolini informed the British of his renewed interest in Ethiopia and suggested further discussions. Britain failed to respond to these overtures, but formed a secret commission under Sir John Maffey to study the question of British interests in Ethiopia.

The Maffey Commission concluded that the chief British interest in Ethiopia was Lake Tana. Britain, the Commission recommended, should strive to secure territorial control over Lake Tana and a corridor joining the lake to the Sudan. This would involve the occupation of Ethiopian territory adjacent to the British colony. If territorial control over Lake Tana was not possible, British and Egyptian interests would have to be secured by concessions from Italy. If either of these objectives were achieved, it was deemed that Italian domination of Ethiopia would

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Erin, We Hardly Knew Ye: Ireland's Hidden Italic Roots

by Rosario Iaconis



With the possible exception of Texas, Ireland leads the world in the per capita production of tall tales. In addition to the literary genius of John Keats, James Joyce and Frank McCourt, the Emerald Isle has been the source of more legends, fables and fairy tales than any other spot on earth. Leprechauns, unicorns and dragons abound in the Celtic imagination. Even Beelzebub can occasionally be found rousing the heathen and tempting the faithful in Counties Cork and Mayo. And why not? The Irish are gifted raconteurs. Ironically, they have the English to thank for this happy state of affairs. By eradicating the Gaelic language, the British forced the Hibernians to master the King's English. The Old Sodders had the last laugh, though, embellishing the truth with a wink and a nod and spinning yarns out of whole cloth to weave a national myth of fierce Celtic independence. Now the fabric is fraying.

Whether or not the Irish saved civilization as purported in today's literary press there was never a question that they successfully resisted it during the Roman Empire. In fact, it has been a proud Gaelic boast that Ireland was too fierce to be an outpost of Roman Italy. Such is the stuff of legend.

On January 21, 1996, Britain's *Sunday Times* revealed that Ireland, like its arch-enemy, England, had been penetrated by the legions of Rome as early as AD 79. According to an article by Ciaran Byrne and John Maas, the myth of Irish resistance to Italy's ancient empire was just that, a fabrication designed to shore up the nation's Celtic identity. The Irish have long held dear the notion that their land had withstood the civilizing tide of Italianization. Whereas the British, Germans and French boasted of Roman London, Cologne and Provence, the Irish hid their Italic roots. Yet today the Emerald Isle is red-faced that one of the most astounding archaeological discoveries of the 20th century has come to light.

Some 15 miles north of Dublin, beneath the savage soil of Drumanagh, Ireland's hidden past is coming to light. A Roman fort built to protect Italian merchants and perhaps expand colonization of the interior was discovered in this rugged patch of the Irish east coast. Roman coins bearing the names of the emperors Titus, Trajan and Hadrian were unearthed, raising the intriguing possibility that the Italic presence in Ireland ran from, at least, AD 79 to AD 138. Italian observers have called this discovery "revolutionary." British archaeologists remain enthralled. Barry Cunliffe, an Oxford University professor of European archaeology, deemed the find "staggering."

Experts agree that Drumanagh not only expands the perimeters of the Roman Empire but enlarges the cultural sweep of the Latin world. Historically, it underscores the importance that Italy's ancient pioneers attached to their civilizing mission. This is a concept that has no parallel in ancient, medieval or modern times. Conquest bereft of mission does not a civilization make.

In his landmark paean to Ireland, *How The Irish Saved Civilization*, Thomas Cahill wrote with ironic pride of how his once primitive ancestors managed to preserve much

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Erin, We Hardly Knew Ye:

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of classical Italian civilization after the fall of Rome. What Cahill could not have known was the extent to which the burly Hibernians of Celtic lore may already have been touched by their Italic teachers. Professor Cunliffe believes that Drumanagh is "one of the most important Roman sites in Europe and fits in exactly with what Rome was doing along all the frontiers of its empire." Had Marcus Aurelius succeeded in pushing back the barbarians elsewhere on the fringes of the Roman Empire, the Danube and Central Europe might have become as thoroughly Italianized as the West.

Irish authorities have been slow to accept the reality that the Emerald Isle was at least in part Italianized. In fact, the National Museum of Ireland engaged in a ten-year cover-up of Drumanagh. Although Roman ornaments, jewelry and coins repeatedly popped up all over Ireland, the Museum and a small band of Irish archaeologists stonewalled. The ancient Italian artifacts that kept surfacing in Dublin and beyond were attributed to British owners. The Irish people were denied a part of their history as these foolish authorities kept the site of Drumanagh a secret for a decade. Once this plot was uncovered, they erected all sorts of legal obstacles to stymie a public display.

One of the reasons for the stonewalling was

undoubtedly cultural. While the Irish have long accepted Italian religious guidance, from St. Patrick to the papacy, secular and historical primacy were entirely different matters. This extended to the Irish Diaspora as well. In America, though most Irish-Americans would *kvell* at the mere mention of the Holy Father (in the days when popes were almost always Italian), many of these selfsame churchgoers excoriated neighborhood Italians for their

*...this Italian beachhead,
when it is fully excavated,
will prove to be the most
momentous discovery in
Erin's history.*

swarthy looks, strange accents and garlicky cuisine. Now to even consider that the "black Irish" among them may be of Italian extraction is a bit much to endure.

Another contributing factor in the Irish Museum's prevarication can be traced to the English occupation. Thomas Cahill quotes British historian Charles Kingsley on the Irish and the great famine: "I am daunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country. I don't believe they

are our fault. I believe that there are not only many more of them than of old, but that they are happier, better and more comfortably fed and lodged under our rule than they ever were. But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours." Such bigotry hardened the Irish and fueled their insularity. To have evaded Roman domination when England was a mere province of Italy gave the Irish one up on their detested masters.

Despite the official resistance to Drumanagh, the Irish are warming to their ancient Italic colonists. Barry Rafferty, professor of archaeology at Dublin's University College, boasted that the discovery of the Roman fort was the most important find in Ireland. That the site was populated by hundreds of people in houses densely packed into an enclosure suggests a widespread Italian presence in the Emerald Isle. Indeed, what has been uncovered thus far indicates Drumanagh was more than a military encampment. The archaeological evidence clearly shows it to be a thriving center of commerce. Richard Warner, the keeper of antiquities at the Ulster Museum, believes this Italian beachhead, when it is fully excavated, will prove to be the most momentous discovery in Erin's history. And then the Irish may have to change their national rallying cry to *Italia Go Bragh*.



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The Man Who Captured Churchill

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standing reward on his head of L.3,000, dead or alive.

News of the valiant exploits of the Italian Scouts spread among Italians around the globe, and fundraisings in support of Ricciardi's corps were initiated in numerous communities. One eager contributor was Peppino Garibaldi, the 19-year-old grandson of the great patriot Giuseppe Garibaldi, who, at the time, was touring South America. It had become a family tradition among Garibaldi's descendants to lend their swords to worthy causes everywhere, and Peppino was anxiously awaiting his father's (Ricciotti) permission to place himself in Ricciardi's service.

Ricciotti Garibaldi eventually did cable his son with instructions to join the conflict in South Africa, but on the side of the British! Peppino naturally received these orders with dismay and incomprehension, since they seemed to contradict the principles of freedom which his family had always championed. With extraordinary insight for the times, his father explained that the principles of freedom and justice, in their true form, were not at all to be found among the Boers, whom he viewed as notorious racists. Although few, if any, other observers had considered the welfare of the native population to be a factor in the struggle, Ricciotti Garibaldi quickly noted the abusive manner in which the Dutch settlers treated blacks. While he harbored no delusions that British policies in this regard would be exemplary, he maintained that the natives would be treated more humanely under an English rather than a Boer government.

Peppino was further reminded of the debt which the Italian Kingdom owed to Britain for its unwavering support throughout the *Risorgimento*, the Italian reunification, and that it would be shameful for any Italian to take up arms against the one nation he regarded as Italy's best friend. Provided with a letter of introduction to Lord Kitchener, Peppino Garibaldi sailed to Capetown, where he was received

"well recommended by (his) name" by the British Commander. Assigned to an Australian cavalry unit, he saw uninterrupted action for the duration of the war.

While fate did not lead Peppino into any direct encounters with Ricciardi's troops, his exposure to Boer prisoners confirmed his father's wisdom. "Their skill and bravery we had to admire, but in personal contact with them I was repelled by their stolid, sullen character and their narrow bigotry...they have fully demonstrated their inability to govern either themselves or the natives".

Once Britain engaged itself in earnest, the outcome of the war was never in doubt. After a few heated battles, the Boer forces were routinely dispersed or defeated until the primary task of the British army was hunting down and mopping up dwindling pockets of resistance.

Ricchiardi was among the diehards who refused to surrender on any account, stubbornly continuing to wage guerrilla warfare long after Britain's victory was an accepted fact. Warned that he would be punished by Italian authorities for his actions, he fled to Argentina when the last remnants of the Boer forces conceded defeat in 1902. Such concerns of retribution were unjustified, however, for the popular press in Italy, generally sympathetic toward the Boers, had similarly defied the government by turning Ricciardi into a folk hero. When he did return home in 1913, it was wholly without consequence or incident.

And young Winston? He of course lived to wage war again, thanks to an Italian Scout.



Young Winston (right) soon after chucking his illegal dum-dum bullets.

Lake Tana

Continued from page 17

not be detrimental to Britain.

Anthony Eden, Britain's Minister for League Affairs, visited Rome in June 1935 and offered a plan involving the transfer of some Ethiopian desert territory in the Ogaden region to Italy. Not surprisingly, this proposal was rejected. Mussolini, in his own words, was "not a collector of deserts." Relations between Britain and Italy rapidly deteriorated.

On August 31, 1935, the world awoke to the news that Addis Ababa was granting a petroleum exploration license for half of Ethiopia to an American firm, Standard Vacuum Oil of New Jersey. Reports circulated that a deal was also being negotiated whereby the British would obtain rights to Lake Tana, the focal point of their strategic interests in East Africa. The Italian press launched an attack exposing this British subterfuge. Within days, the United States Congress demanded Standard Oil pull out of the agreement in the interest of American neutrality. The British scheme collapsed.

The Invasion

Having run the diplomatic gauntlet, on

October 3, 1935, Italy invaded Ethiopia. On October 7th, under intense pressure from France and especially Britain, the League of Nations branded Italy an aggressor and several days later voted limited economic sanctions against it.

After a slow start under General DeBono, the Italian offensive moved forward rapidly under the leadership of General Badoglio from the north and General Graziani from the south. The Ethiopian forces made the mistake of meeting the Italians in direct large scale battles. They were overwhelmed at the first and second Battles of Tembien, the Battle of Shire and the Battle of Lake Ashangi. To deal with the vast distances the Italian forces pioneered the first massive airborne logistic system. On May 2, 1936, Haile Selassie fled his country, and on May 5, 1936, after a campaign of little more than 200 days, Marshall Badoglio entered Addis Ababa. On May 9th, Mussolini proclaimed the new Italian empire effectively freeing two million Ethiopian slaves.

What Might Have Been

Had Haile Selassie not been encouraged by the British, he might very well have come to terms with Italy and secured for his nation a status similar to the one Egypt had with Britain

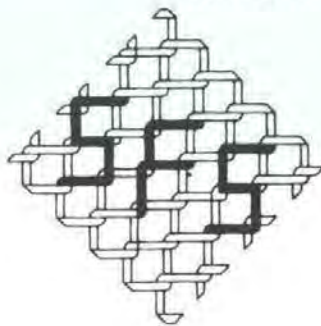
or Tunisia had with France. Nevertheless, the defeated Ethiopians were none the worse. The Italians soon launched a massive program of public works in Ethiopia which included roads, railways, factories, hospitals, elementary and technical schools, power plants, telephone systems and municipal buildings. This unprecedented construction program proved to be a contribution of lasting value to Ethiopia. As the *Encyclopedia Britannica* puts it:

"It is doubtful whether any other European power had ever poured such resources of men and money into any colonial possession as did Italy during its short tenancy of Abyssinia."

And Lake Tana? It still flowed, uninterrupted, into the Nile.

If the British had only realized that their nation's interests would be far more seriously threatened by German aggression in Europe than by Italian colonial expansion in remote East Africa, the united front of Italy, France and Britain against Hitler might have been preserved. Nazi aggression might very well have been successfully opposed in its early stages, and the history of the world could have indeed been quite different. In retrospect, the world was forced to pay a very heavy price for Britain's obsession with a lake.

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Italian contributions to opera, classical, and folk music are known throughout the world. Yet there is another, uniquely American form of music where the Italic influence has also been prodigious. It is jazz, that buoyant mix of improvisation and ensemble playing long recognized by Europeans and an increasing number of Americans as our nation's richest musical art form.

Although the earliest sources of jazz are rightly attributed to African-Americans and Creoles (people of mixed black, European, or Native American stock), Italian Americans have exerted a steady and creative influence on the music throughout its history. These contributions were noted by jazz scholar Joachim-Ernst Berendt, who wrote that, "No other European country was the ancestral origin of as many significant American jazz musicians as Italy."

The Italian-American imprint began during the music's infancy in New Orleans at the turn of the century. Today, the first image that many people have when they refer to jazz in the Crescent City is of a parade of black musicians leading a funeral through the streets. In fact the Olympia Brass Band and Buddy Bolden's Ragtime Band were indeed organized to accompany funeral processions. Yet this custom bears a striking resemblance to the Sicilian tradition of a white uniformed cortege marching to an above-ground cemetery, as well as the centuries' old pilgrimage of the many Italian *festa* bands that strolled through the towns of both Italy and America. Is it possible that the citizens of New Orleans observed these *festa* bands and decided to adopt the customs as part of their cultural rituals?

There is much historical evidence to support this theory. In 1880, Sicilians began migrating to New Orleans in massive numbers. A large number of these immigrants were musicians specifically brought there to perform at the French Opera House, which was built in 1880 for the city's high society. Since few of the native residents could perform grand opera, Italian musicians were in demand. Many of these musicians also played in "festa bands" including the band of Giuseppe Alessandra, who joined with John Loyacano to form the Alliance Dixieland Band around 1900. It's also entirely conceivable that *When the Saints Go Marching In*, the quintessential Dixieland song, was inspired by someone watching one of the many

Perhaps the strongest link in the Italian-American jazz heritage is Dominick "Nick" La Rocca, the clarinetist whom many credit with inventing Dixieland jazz.

Italian Saint Days processions. The visual image of pilgrims marching down a street behind a saint's statue, combined with the fact that most of the black citizens of New Orleans were not Catholics, lends credence to this supposition.

Perhaps the strongest link in the Italian-American jazz heritage is Dominick "Nick" La Rocca, the clarinetist whom many credit with inventing Dixieland jazz. In 1913, La Rocca (joined by drummer Anthony Sbarbaro) formed the Original Dixieland Jazz Band, the New Orleans-based group which went on to be the first outfit to record a jazz record, the first jazz artists to sell over one million copies, the first act to play in Chicago, New York, and Europe, and the first act to bill themselves as a "jazz" band. La Rocca also composed the classic *Tiger Rag* now known as *Hold That Tiger*, the official theme song of Louisiana State University.

While historians have lionized Jelly Roll Morton, Louis Armstrong, King Oliver and Sidney Bechet as the inventors of jazz, La Rocca is described by various writers as "merely adequate", "limited in inspiration and creativity" and "jerky". Author Rudi Blesh even

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Italian-Americans In Jazz

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credited Morton as the author of *Tiger Rag* in his book *Shining Trumpets*. Nevertheless, musicians like Armstrong still recognized La Rocca's pioneering influence—"Before I learned to play trumpet, the first great jazz orchestra was formed in New Orleans by Dominick (Nick) La Rocca", Armstrong wrote in his autobiography, *Swing That Music*. "His fame as one of the great pioneers of syncopated music should last as long as American music lives."

Some great Italian-American jazzmen that were present at the time of jazz's inception include:

Leon Roppolo (1902-1943) The son of a renowned clarinetist from the French Opera, Roppolo helped introduce a Davenport, Iowa teen, Bix Biederbecke, to jazz in 1920, and began the famous Friars Society Orchestra with Biederbecke and Arnold Loyacano. Crowned as the heir apparent to La Rocca, his New Orleans Rhythm Kings replaced La Rocca's ODJB in Chicago in 1922, selling out for months and recording a string of hit records. Yet, like the great Buddy Bolden, his mental health began to fail, and after gigging with the infamous Halfway House Orchestra, Roppolo's final notes echoed through the halls of a New Orleans sanitarium, where he died in 1943.

Joseph "Wingy" Manone (1900-1982) After losing his right arm in a streetcar accident at the age of 12, "Wingy" Manone helped to support his family by playing kazoo for the patrons of Storyville, New Orleans' famous red light district. His Acadian Serenaders toured the Gulf coast before he became a headliner on 52nd Street in New York during the 1930's. His swinging style is best represented in *Isle of Capri*, a hit which prompted a move to Hollywood and appearances in several films. His autobiography, *Trumpet On the Wing*, was published by Doubleday.

Louis Prima (1911-1983) Born on the edge of New Orleans' Storyville brothels, Louis played with his brother Leon in New Orleans before his New Orleans Gang Band delighted audiences at New York's Famous Door. His gravelly Louis Armstrong voice and humorous antics led to roles in films like *Rhythm on the River* with Bing Crosby, and a string of Italian-influenced hits like *Angelina*, and *Zuma Zuma/Cella Luna*. After the decline of the big bands, he and his (fourth) wife Keely Smith teamed up for another run of hits which included *Black Magic*. His greatest achievement, however, is his 1936 composition of *Sing, Sing, Sing*, which was later recorded by Benny Goodman and stands as the most powerful big band/jazz song ever recorded.

Italian-Americans who also shaped jazz from the Crescent City include: **Tony Parenti**, a clarinetist and sax player who worked with Jack Laine and as a staff musician for the Radio City Symphony



Orchestra, CBS radio, and Columbia Records; **Arnold Loyacano**, who played with the French Opera House, New Orleans Rhythm Kings, Jimmy Durante's Original Jazz Band, Sharkey Bonano, and the NBC Radio Orchestra; **Joseph "Sharkey" Bonano**, who succeeded Nick La Rocca as the leader of ODJB, replaced Bix Biederbecke on the Wolverines, and later went on to form his own band, Sharkey Bonano and his Bunch, becoming a recording star for Columbia Records; and **Phil Zito**, a big band protege of Nick La Rocca and Sharkey Bonano still active in New Orleans at the age of 85.

The Italic influence on jazz was by no means an historical fluke. The Italians who came to America brought with them a solid musical tradition, a love of melody and harmony and *spontaneita'*. As immigrants who were often excluded from the mainstream, they saw music as a way to express themselves socially, politically, and artistically. Jazz, which combines the gusto of folk music with the precision of classical orchestration, was a new music for a new land. It was an ideal conduit for Italic creativity, and as many musicians took their place in that giant social ensemble known as America, the Italic influence on jazz spread across the nation along with the music. Some of America's Italian-American jazz and big band jazz pioneers include:

Joe Venuti (1905-1978) Known as the father of jazz violin, Venuti almost singlehandedly introduced the violin into the jazz ensemble, paving the way for Stephane Grapelli, Johnny Frigo, Jean-Luc Ponty, and many others. Dubbed "the mad fiddler from Philly" for his playful sense of humor, Venuti's first major band (1925) with Paul Whiteman included fellow sidemen Bix Beiderbecke, and Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey. From there he formed his own band in the 1930s and was a regular performer on Bing Crosby's radio show.

Eddie Lang/ b. Salvatore Massero (1902-1933) A boyhood *paesano* of Joe Venuti, Lang studied the violin at the age of seven before turning to the guitar, his preferred instrument. His 1927 recording of Nick La Rocca's *Ostrich Walk*, which featured Bix Biederbecke and Frankie Trambuer, is considered to be a signpost for its period, and displayed Lang's firecracker chords. In 1930, he appeared in the film *King of Jazz* with Joe Venuti and Bing Crosby, who said of Lang: "In the opinion of all the guitar players of his day, and many since, he was the greatest one of the craft that ever lived." Lang died tragically at the age of 31, due to an embolism from a tonsillectomy. But for many, his forceful guitar riffs will remain as strong as Enrico Caruso's soaring vocal notes.

Adrian Rollini (1904-1956) An Italian-American prodigy, Rollini played violin in a Chopin concert at New York's Waldorf Astoria Hotel at the age of four, mastered the (then) exotic instrument called the vibraphone, and learned how to play the bass saxophone in a week. As a member of Bix Biederbecke's legendary Wolverines, Rollini's bass saxophone was a major influence on Coleman Hawkins, who held Rollini's masterly form in awe. Rollini died under mysterious circumstances after opening his own jazz club, where Wingy Manone and his quartet were regulars.

Joe (Joseph Francis) Marsala (1907-1978) and **Marty (Mario Salvatore) Marsala (1909-1975)** Forget the Fabulous Baker Boys. Joe and Marty Marsala were the real thing. *I fratelli* Marsala came from a music-loving family and grew up in a nearly all-black neighborhood in Chicago. Although Joe was equally well known for his

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The Italian Republic At Fifty

by Dominic R. Massaro

At fifty, the Italian Republic has clearly come of age. It enjoys membership in the "Group of Seven"; the current presidency of the European Union; the just-completed presidency of the U.N. Security Council.

Can there be any doubt that the land of our forefathers — a leader in food, fashion, film and foreign investment, the world's fifth most industrialized nation — stands as a formidable presence on the very threshold of a new international order. June 2, 1996, gave ample cause to mark a half century of democracy triumphant in a fully transformed nation. But 50 years ago, in 1946, the proclamation of a new Republic was less a cause for celebration than one for concern.

The 50th Anniversary provides a moment for reflection on the tumultuous events surrounding the establishment of what is today the Italian Republic — an entity conceived in trauma and delivered in crises — as well as the role played by the Italian American "Italy Lobby" in furthering harmony between the U.S. and Italy at a crucial moment in history.

End of Monarchy

The Cold War manifestly accounted for a good part of the defeat of Communism in Italy. This is in sharp contrast to the victory of ex-communists in recent parliamentary elections. But for three intervening years, from the end of World War II until the first parliamentary elections in April, 1948, Western leaders feared that Italy would, as so much of post-war Europe in fact did, align itself with the Soviets.

In a nationwide referendum fifty years ago, conducted simultaneously with the election of a post-war Constituent Assembly, the Italian people voted for a republic as against retention of the monarchy. The margin was less than 2%. Ten days later, briefly considering a resort to force, and following a reign of only 35 days, King Umberto II quietly went into exile. On June 28, 1946, the distinguished Liberal, Enrico De Nicola, took office as Italy's first president.

Norwithstanding, Churchill's words, uttered at the conclusion of



Defeated Italy's misery in 1945

the war the year before, still rang true: "The essential question is whether Italy is to become a parliamentary democracy or a totalitarian state. . . It is a matter of indifference whether Italy chooses to be a monarchy or a republic." Indeed, a major concern was to

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The Italian Republic At Fifty

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prevent the referendum from becoming a pretext for a *coup d'état*, and ingrained suspicions led to a growing fear of a Communist takeover. The margin between Right and Left was even closer in the election for members of the Constituent Assembly. Hailed by all factions as a forum that would give legal form and political legitimacy to an Italy emerging from the ravages of war, the returns gave the Christian Democrats, headed by Alcide De Gasperi, then serving as interim prime minister, 207 seats; the Socialists won 115, and the Communists, 104. The remaining 140 seats, out of a total of 556 delegates elected, were distributed among smaller parties. With 41 seats, the Liberals were the only other meaningful force. For all practical purposes, then, the Constituent Assembly would be the work of Communists, Socialists and Christian Democrats.

Double Game

Despite outward harmony and a public convergence of views, the political situation was quite polarized. The new Italy, the rival parties publicly concurred, was to be a pluralistic party democracy with guarantees of speech, assembly and the press. Counter-balancing a fundamental capitalist structure was the rights of labor. But the economic dimension of hoped-for political stabilization gave rise to recalcitrance; widespread unemployment led to labor unrest, crippling strikes and riot — all encouraged by the Left!

Other problems were pressing. Ratification of a peace treaty, with attendant Soviet demands for hundreds of millions of dollars and the Italian fleet as wartime reparations was still an open question. Tito's troops were at the ready as the fate of Trieste hung in the balance. Inflation was threatening the viability of the lira. Food and fuel was scarce. Banditry was widespread. Black market activity was everywhere. Hunger, homelessness and massive physical destruction were all present, together with two Marxist parties whose membership with a De Gasperi Coalition did not prevent them from directing discontent. The West watched with growing concern as Communists and Socialists alike played what for all intents and purposes was a double game: a role in the government while simultaneously arousing popular unrest against the state. Italy had only woefully unprepared internal security forces to discourage an insurrection. And the potential for a violent challenge to the new Republic increased as plans for stabilization continued to unravel. De Gasperi looked to America for aid to rescue a threatening situation. However, by the end of 1946, American public and governmental interest in Italy had reached a low point, just as that country's fortunes plummeted to the nadir.

With the war's end, the legislative authority for direct American assistance had lapsed. The U.S. entered the postwar era without effective control of its primary reconstruction tool, economic aid. And neither Congress nor the American people appeared willing to finance a liberated Europe. Enter the Italy Lobby.

The Italy Lobby

The growth of a broad-based lobby that became a factor in United States policy calculations first emerged during the war. The American Committee for Italian Democracy was an uneasy marriage.

...the lobby became an ally of the Truman administration, and its constituents were a factor in the president's stunning 1948 re-election triumph.

Many of its personalities, prior to the outbreak of hostilities, were open antagonists. The fall of Mussolini in July, 1943, however, provided them with the opportunity to solidify into a dominant political force within the Italian American community. The most powerful elements of the anti-Fascist movement coalesced with the most important leaders of the organized Italian American community to reorder Italian American priorities. With Communism replacing Fascism as the immediate concern, strong pressure on Roosevelt administration Italian policy decisions quickly got underway.

Judge Felix Forte, of Massachusetts, first American-born national president of the Order Sons of Italy in America (OSIA), was a key player. He could provide rank-and-file support through a network of local lodges spread throughout the country. New York labor leader Luigi Antonini was another. It was he who, along with Fiorello La Guardia, fomented the great schism of the Order over the issue of Fascism in 1926, followed by the establishment of a parallel structure headquartered in New York. Antonini's fledgling United Italian American Labor Council already enjoyed strong ties to the Italian labor movement (it would later be a significant factor in splitting the Italian Socialist party), and the new common enemy immediately served to reunite the Order's ideological factions, ending the schism in 1943 with the readmission of scores of breakaway lodges. The third personality was Generoso Pope, publisher of the New York-based, mass circulation *Il Progresso*. His rapprochement with Antonini allowed these three to become champions of a postwar democracy for Italy. They established numerous relief efforts, mobilizing both private and public aid for Italy. Oftentimes with similar aims but separate initiatives, they rallied public opinion against the totalitarian threat from the Left, and focused an Italian American consensus on the necessity of defeating any Communist encroachment on the Italian peninsula.

Common Cause

The Italy Lobby was a political problem for Truman from the first days of his administration. It allied itself with those in and out of government concerned about the geopolitical and strategic, as well as, the human consequences of the economic collapse of Italy. By 1945 it had evolved into an informally organized broad based coalition, the Council for Italian American Affairs, later Common Cause. Generally supporting of the political and economic objectives of the Italian Government, it was the basis of anti-administration political action whenever such was not the case.

To rectify its image, the U.S. began to strengthen the position of De Gasperi's government with gestures of public support. Truman promised that Italy's wartime contributions would be remembered when the treaty of peace was concluded. The administration informed Italian Americans of its efforts to negotiate a fair armistice agreement in the face of Soviet demands. But these gestures did little

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The Italian Republic At Fifty

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to raise its standing with the Italy Lobby. Italians, in turn, realized that they would have to defend their own interests while relying on Italian American leaders to keep up the pressure. The Italian American leadership agreed. Committees for a just peace for Italy were organized with strong anti-Soviet overtones, and a 1946 mission to Paris, site of the treaty negotiations, saw both Antonini and Forte in leadership roles. While the lobby was less successful in efforts to influence either the burdensome outcome of the treaty (extensive losses of wealth, territories and prestige for Italy) or its adoption by the U.S. Senate, during the 1947-48 crisis that followed the lobby played a vital role in building public support for an anti-communist intervention. In the process, all the while leveraging with the Republic-



Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi

licans, the lobby became an ally of the Truman administration, and its constituents were a factor in the president's stunning 1948 re-election triumph.

De Gasperi's Visit

By the end of 1946, Italy was on the verge of economic and political collapse. The growing strength of the well-organized Italian Communist party and its "unity of action" ally, the militant Italian Socialist party,

raised the specter of a radical pro-Soviet government taking power.

In January, 1947, De Gasperi crossed the Atlantic and came to America to plead Italy's cause. The State Department gave Pope a coordinative role. Forte greeted the Italian premier at a gala Sons of Italy banquet in Cleveland. In New York, Antonini's Labor Council played host. The visit was a public relations triumph; after ten days, the prime minister left Washington officialdom with an outpouring of favorable Italian sentiment. The situation in Italy was soon to be reversed, and the pro-American orientation that Italy has exhibited to this day asserted. The launching of dramatic American initiatives of European recovery — The Truman Doctrine (interim aid to stabilize democracy in an American sphere of influence), the Marshall Plan (opportunity for nations to regain control of their destinies through economic reconstruction), and the Atlantic Alliance (participation in NATO, the American-led defense organization) — proved crucial to success.

Following left-wing gains in the Rome city elections in mid-October, the political situation heated up; Communist-incited violence grew, reaching a peak in December. That month, De Gasperi termed the violence a "declaration of war" on his government and on democracy. Truman warned that any revolt would be met with American intervention under treaty obligations to protect democratic institutions put into place in Paris, while at the same time his promised interim aid cleared Congress.

Italy's rapidly approaching first national parliamentary elections, scheduled for April 18, 1948, now took center stage. The Left easily defined the issues on which the campaign would be fought: De Gasperi was turning Italy into an American satellite. The Communists and Socialists also expected to get good political mileage out of painfully slow economic recovery; and Communist-inspired violence was diminished to deprive the Right of a law and order issue.

The Italy Lobby now heightened discussion of American initiatives. At the same moment, Antonini's Labor Council exploited the rift between left-wing and moderate Socialists, now split into two parties, the Socialists and the Social Democrats. And a national letter writing campaign, an incalculable contribution by OSIA, was launched under the guidance of its new national leader, George Spatuzza of Illinois. All Americans of Italian origin were urged to write letters to friends and relatives in Italy "to oppose Communist totalitarianism . . . to keep the faith, to believe in the future of Italy, to believe in the sincerity of America, in her human sentiments and in her unselfish friendship." Pope's *Il Progresso* took up the call, as did the American Catholic hierarchy. The spontaneous initiative was joined by the American press.

The 1948 Election

Meanwhile, the Italian government prepared for the election and the possibility of a civil war. Smaller Italian parties rallied around De Gasperi in the face of an insurrection. A Communist coup in nearby Czechoslovakia in late February pronounced a ban on further paramilitary activity by the Left. But the Left was well organized, and continued to exploit American interference in Italian affairs, demanding that Italy take a neutral position in the widening East-West power struggle. All the while the letters continued, reaching such numbers that postal authorities were forced to provide special handling to expedite the volume. The Vatican was galvanized by American action and Pope Pius XII personally waded into the campaign. Italian pulpits now became increasingly vocal against godless Marxism.

With the aid of the U.S., De Gasperi turned the 1948 election into a referendum on Communism. Economic issues fell to the background. De Gasperi hammered away at fundamental choices: democracy or totalitarianism, Christianity or atheism, alignment with the West or the East. The Italian people responded with a resounding Christian Democratic victory: 48.5% of the popular vote and an absolute majority in parliament! De Gasperi could govern even without the moderate Left.

Intervention in Italy was a major foreign policy triumph for the Truman administration. There would be other skirmishes, to be sure, but the Italian Lobby — a high point in Italian American dialogue with its government — would fade away by the end of the decade. Notwithstanding, the impetus it gave for the stabilization of Italy was a positive achievement of lasting value, allowing Italy to build a modern society within the framework of a democratic state. June 2, 1996, was a special anniversary. It marked a half century on the path of freedom and justice for all, still being travelled by our two republics in partnership.

[Dominic R. Massaro is a Justice of the Supreme Court of New York. He holds the rank of Grande Ufficiale in Italy's Order of Merit. He is a member of ISI's Advisory Council.]

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Michael A. Carbone, Sr.

Italian-Americans In Jazz

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humanitarianism (he and Benny Goodman broke racial barriers by actively recruiting black musicians), the clarinetist and sax player wrote the hit tune *Don't Cry Joe* for the Gordon Jenkins Orchestra in 1944 before retiring to become a respected music publisher. Trumpeter Marty became popular on the West Coast with his own band while also backing such legends as Sidney Bechet and Earl Hines. He gave up music in the 1960's due to illness.

Frank Signorelli (1901-1975) At the tender age of 16, this pianist and composer assembled the Original Memphis Five in 1917 to play at the Balconnades Ballroom on 66th Street in New York. The Memphis Five released several records, and remained a top draw well into the 1930's. Band members included Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey. A bandmate of Joe Venuti and Adrian Rollini in the late 1930's, Signorelli authored such songs as *I'll Never Be the Same*, *A Blues Serenade*, and *Stairway to the Stars*.

Michael "Dodo" Marmarosa (1925-) As a teenager, this pianist from Pittsburgh played in the big bands of Gene Krupa, Tommy Dorsey, and Charlie Barnett. He then spent the war years playing with Artie Shaw, thus accomplishing the feat of playing in four of the most renowned white big bands in the world before he was 21. Marmarosa's genius led him past the big band sound, and in 1927 he joined the likes of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Max Roach to become the pioneer pianist of be-bop. Marmarosa's work with Parker is among the most influential and ground-breaking in

the history of jazz. Known for his zany antics when not tickling the ivories, Marmarosa's most puzzling act was his disappearance from jazz and public life during the 1960's, presumably to a farm in Michigan.

Boniface Leonardo Ferdinand "Buddy" De Franco (1923-) An effortless technician also known for his solo work, this Camden, New Jersey native played lead clarinet for Gene Krupa, Charlie Barnett, and Tommy Dorsey. His brilliant melodic lines helped him break social and racial barriers, and he was asked to perform with the Count Basie Octet (1950-1954) and a quartet that featured Art Blakey and Sonny Clark. De Franco led a revived version of the Glenn Miller Orchestra from 1966-1974 and continues to tour and lecture extensively throughout the United States and Europe.

Louis Bellson a.k.a. Balassoni (1924-) Along with Gene Krupa, Art Blakey, and Max Roach, Louis is ranked as one of the greatest and most enduring big band and jazz drummers in the music's history. A former time-keeper for Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman and Harry James, Bellson's popping tom toms, crashing cymbals, and snapping snare made him the driving force and the "star" attraction of the big bands. Bellson has recorded or appeared on over 200 albums, and played with Ella Fitzgerald, Stan Getz, Dizzy Gillespie, and Louis Armstrong, to name just a few. Honored with the Jazz Masters Award from the National Endowment of the Arts in 1994, Bellson, a native of Rock Falls, Illinois, still tours extensively with his own band, The Louis Bellson Quintet.

End of Part One



Hail Panania

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needed to play on the fears of national disunity. From here came the idea of secession, a real out and out process of separation, more or less violent (depending on the resistance of the "centralist" State of Rome), that would create the Independent Republic of Padania (the part of Italy north of the Po river). The "plan" of the leader, who grotesquely compares himself to Gandhi, is that of inviting the population of the North to revolt. At first, the subscription booklets to RAI will be burnt, the State television for which every family pays 200,000 lire (\$130) annually. Afterwards, they will demolish the relay stations that give voice to the *Terroni* (a racist term — meaning "earth-colored" — used for southern Italians). In the meantime, on the 15th of September (1996) the Padanians will line up along the Po river, and here they will swear allegiance to the budding state. About 100 polling stations posted along the river will give citizens the opportunity to vote for representatives of the people in the new "Northern Parliament," whose designated headquarters is Venice. At this point, the prefects of the central government will be invited to leave, and the fiscal revolt shall commence, that is, nobody will pay taxes anymore to the authorities in Rome.

If you think this idea of inciting one-third the population of Italy against its central government is absurd or unthinkable, I fear you are deceiving yourself. Don't get me wrong, Italy is not really at risk but we cannot underestimate the strategic effectiveness of "hurricane" Bossi. On one hand, and this is indisputable, only a small portion of the "Padanian" population is truly willing to follow the dictates of the League to the letter, although Bossi promises millions of people ready for revolution. On the other hand, the small and medium-sized industrialists, the intellectuals, and many common citizens don't agree with secession. It remains true, however, that the success of the party of the North in recent years was in great part due to its persuasive force, and to its capacity to separate itself markedly, in tone

and content, from the traditional parties. When the scandals of *Tangentopoli* ("Kick-back City") stained the good name of all the traditional political movements, the League easily found an opening — if not a chasm — to exploit.

And even then it was doing it with exaggerated, violent, extreme and sometimes vulgar statements, to such a degree that more than one of his adversaries has condemned Bossi a potential Mussolini.

May I be allowed to deride those who dismiss the leaguist leader with a shrug of their shoulders ("he's too absurd to have a following"), or with hysterical alarm ("he's a would-be dictator."). Both these positions are exactly the best conditions for success of an independent Padania. The truth is that this "secession" is the perfect example of a bluff.

In fencing, it is common for contenders to simulate, with explicit gestures, an attack of a certain type, inducing the adversary to enact with a corresponding defense. But at that point one alters his own maneuver, putting the opponent off balance, and striking home. In a certain way, this is what categorizes Umberto Bossi's strategy: to periodically create a real political crisis, make some extreme demands, insult your adversaries, promise armed revolution, even threaten political assassination (Bossi used such threats against a judge first and even against the ex-President of the Chamber, Irene Pivetti.). Afterwards? Well nothing, but in the meantime the national leadership mobilizes itself and concedes a few important points so as not to alienate the northern masses. In the end, the wrath of the hoarse Umberto seems to calm down, but only to erupt again in a few days. Almost like a strong-willed mother who dominates her siblings, Bossi "scolds" the Italian political system and pricks it continuously, sadistically, to induce it to move



Umberto Bossi: The mouse that roars

slowly in the desired direction.

Our Italian-American cousins can sleep very peacefully because on the 15th of September (1996) they won't read in their papers that the small Italy has become even smaller by a war of secession. But the future may reserve some surprises. The Northern League has already obtained, by tricks and threats, the subject of federalism on Rome's agenda. This would have been unthinkable up to a few years ago, when Prodi, D'Alema, and Bertinotti saw in the chief of the "Lumbards" a mad and raving racist. Today, however, Bossi has realized that without another electro-shock treatment, Italy's leadership would bury federalism indefinitely. Secession is not a concrete idea, and I believe that not even he who gave birth to it thinks it reasonable or viable; but under the aspect of pure strategy it is worthy of the best Machiavelli. If the *end* is to make the North, the industrial engine of the nation, more autonomous then the threat of civil war represents the perfect *means* to achieve it.

[NOTE: The September 15th demonstration in Venice did not achieve the numbers Bossi anticipated. An estimated crowd of about 30,000 gathered. On the same day, the right-wing National Alliance under Gianfranco Fini assembled a crowd of 150,000 in Milan to oppose secession.]

(Mario Ubiale is a graduate in Sociology specializing in Mass Communication. He is from northern Italy.)

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Fatalismo e Degradazione Etnica

È forse possibile che i dirigenti della NIAF (National Italian American Foundation) e dell'OSIA (Order Sons of Italy in America) hanno perso la testa? È possibile che le gerarchie di due tra le organizzazioni etniche più rispettate degli Stati Uniti siano cadute vittime del tristemente famoso fatalismo che affligge tanti dei nostri fratelli? Il fatto è che leggendo i propri nomi ad equivoci buffoni hollywoodiani come Chazz Palminteri e Tony Lo Bianco, essi non hanno solo deciso di sventolare bandiera bianca, ma hanno addirittura legittimato la degradazione etnica che dovremmo invece combattere.

La prima domanda che si affaccia alla mente è la seguente: questi dirigenti hanno effettivamente visto *A Bronx Tale* di Palminteri e *The Juror* di Lo Bianco? Se lo avessero fatto, questo articolo sarebbe inutile. Questi film infatti, con la loro impressionante rappresentazione della nostra comunità, non costituiscono di certo una base per l'orgoglio etnico. La Lega Antidiffamazione B'nai B'rith non accetterebbe mai una simile prostituzione ai mass media per vendere i biglietti di una serata di gala. Se però facciamo così, viene da chiederci quale sia il nostro scopo nella vita.

Sia l'OSIA che la NIAF hanno dei comitati per il monitoraggio dei mass media, quale è stata la loro reazione davanti

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La Repubblica Italiana: I Cinquantesimo Anniversario

di Dominic R. Massaro

Nel 1946 gli Stati Uniti non sembravano ancora preparati a finanziare l'Europa liberata. Nacque allora la "lobby Italia".

Il cinquantenario della Repubblica offre lo stimolo a una riflessione sui tumultuosi eventi che ne hanno accompagnato i primi passi e sul ruolo avuto dalla "lobby Italia" formata dagli italoamericani nello stimolare la solidarietà fra gli Stati Uniti e l'Italia in un momento cruciale della storia.

Per tre anni, dalla fine della seconda guerra mondiale alle prime elezioni parlamentari nell'aprile del 1948, i leader dell'Occidente ebbero motivo di temere che l'Italia si allineasse con i sovietici, come fece molta parte dell'Europa postbellica.

Nel referendum condotto contemporaneamente alle elezioni per l'Assemblea costituente postbellica, il popolo italiano aveva votato per la Repubblica e contro il mantenimento della monarchia, per un margine inferiore al 2 per cento dei voti.

Ciò nonostante le parole di Churchill, espresse l'anno prima a conclusione della guerra, mantenevano la loro validità: "La domanda essenziale è se l'Italia diventerà una democrazia parlamentare oppure uno Stato totalitario: che scelga di essere una monarchia o una Repubblica è indifferente". I risultati diedero alla Democrazia cristiana, guidata da Alcide De Gasperi, in

quel momento presidente del Consiglio ad interim, 207 seggi, 115 ai socialisti, 104 ai comunisti, 140 seggi rimanenti, su un totale di 556 eletti, furono distribuiti fra i partiti minori. Con i loro 41 seggi, i liberali erano l'unica altra forza significativa. Era quindi inevitabile che l'Assemblea costituente fosse dominata da comunisti, socialisti e democristiani e che la Costituzione fosse opera loro.

Nonostante l'armonia esteriore e una pubblica convergenza di vedute, la situazione politica era estremamente polarizzata. I partiti rivali erano formalmente d'accordo che la nuova Italia dovesse essere una democrazia pluralista con libertà di parola, riunione e stampa. La struttura economica doveva essere fundamentalmente capitalista, bilanciata da una legislazione sui diritti del lavoro. Ma le dimensioni economiche dell'auspicata stabilizzazione politica causarono ostilità: la diffusa disoccupazione condusse ad agitazioni operaie, scioperi paralizzanti e tumulti, il tutto su incoraggiamento della sinistra.

Altri problemi erano egualmente urgenti: la ratifica di un trattato di pace che includeva pretese sovietiche di risarcimenti per centinaia di milioni di dollari e la flotta italiana. Le truppe di Tito erano pronte e il destino di Trieste pesantemente minacciato. L'inflazione minacciava la consistenza della lira. Cibo e combustibili scarseggiavano. Era diffuso il banditismo, il mercato nero dominava ovunque. La gente aveva fame, mancava di abitazioni, incombevano massicce distruzioni fisiche. La presenza nel governo di coalizione guidato da De

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Fatalismo e Degradazione

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alla scelta dei premiati? Siamo forse aspettando che Puzo e Coppola si facciano avanti?

L'Italic Studies Institute merita le nostre congratulazioni per aver resistito ai tentativi da parte di Tony Lo Bianco di sedere al tavolo d'onore del gala dell'ISI nel maggio scorso, in occasione della consegna al regista cinematografico e teatrale Franco Zeffirelli di un riconoscimento per la splendida carriera. Sebbene Lo Bianco fosse stato in passato molto caro all'ISI per la sua professata avversione ai ruoli di mafioso, egli, come tanti altri suoi pari, ha rincorso i ruoli da mafioso al punto di assistere al processo Gotti e di fare il verso di fronte ai giornalisti con una famosa frase come: "Quando un cosa va fatta..."

Mentre noi arranchiamo per andare a lavorare ogni giorno per guadagnarci il pane quotidiano e passiamo ore e ore di sera cercandi di elevare la nostra coscienza etnica, uomini come Palminteri, Puzo, Coppola, Aiello e Lo Bianco svendono la propria etnicità, o meglio la NOSTRA etnicità, per tutto ciò che tira sul mercato.

Dove una volta prevaleva lo spirito romano ora abita il fatalismo inculcatoci dall'occupazione dei Borboni di Spagna. Ci siamo proprio abbassati tanto da rendere onore a coloro che avevamo giurato di combattere? Coloro che denigrano la nostra storia e le nostre tradizioni, coloro che perpetuano il pregiudizio che mette in pericolo le nostre libertà civili, coloro che condannano i nostri figli alla vergogna etnica, coloro che prostituiscono la nostra cultura mentre noi combattiamo per cercare di conservare la sua dignità? È questo il meglio che 15 milioni di Italo-Americani e 3.000 anni di civiltà etrusca ed italiana riesce a produrre? Abbiamo così poco rispetto di noi stessi che arriviamo ad esaltare gli architetti della nostra sconfitta? Siamo così impregnati di disgusto per noi stessi da lasciare che il male trionfi?

- Rosario Iaconis

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AVE PADANIA?

Gli italiani amano le vacanze e il mese d'agosto giunge ogni anno a regalare una tregua alla popolazione del Belpaese. Stanchi delle grigie giornate del lungo inverno, i nostri concittadini progettano i loro soggiorni estivi all'insegna dell'oblio: mare o montagna, molto buon cibo e poco impegno. I quotidiani e i telegiornali sembrano adeguarsi all'umore svogliato delle orde di vacanzieri e sospendono per un mese la lagna a base di inflazione, riforme istituzionali e colloqui bilaterali. Chi è stato dunque l'incontrastato mattatore delle prime pagine di Ferragosto? Quale politico sarebbe in grado di abbandonare i toni arzigogolati del dibattito per divenire miracolosamente fonte di divertito interesse per i suoi connazionali, allungati nella panciulle sudaticcia delle spiagge? Senza dubbio la risposta che ogni attento italiano darebbe è che si tratta di Umberto Bossi, leader maximo della Lega Lombarda.

Per due settimane almeno a cavallo dei giorni più caldi di quest'estate atipica (da anni non pioveva tanto), Bossi ha voluto che le sue ferie di Ponte di Legno fossero l'occasione per lanciarsi in una girandola di vere e proprie gag. I maggiori giornali della nazione hanno così titolato quasi ogni giorno con le "sparate" del Capo del Carroccio. Ma perchè questo vulcanico risveglio? Da anni Bossi, e questo lo avevamo capito, vorrebbe per l'Italia il federalismo. Ma da quando il suo movimento, la Lega, ha avuto abbastanza voti per divenire ago della bilancia nel Governo Berlusconi prima e un baluardo dell'opposizione a Prodi poi, l'"Umberto" si deve essere reso conto che il progetto federale era sulle bocche di tutti. Molto semplicemente gli esponenti degli altri partiti principali avevano compreso che senza un accenno al federalismo nei loro programmi avrebbero perso i voti di buona parte del Nord. In men che non si dica, il buon vecchio Bossi, vistosi sottratto il proprio cavallo di battaglia, ha giustamente aggiornato la sua posizione in merito: voilà la secessione.

Spieghiamoci meglio. Il governo Prodi, attualmente in carica, prevede di portare avanti in qualche modo una vaga forma di

federalismo. Di per sé, ciò dovrebbe significare che la Lega Lombarda ha raggiunto uno dei suoi obiettivi principali. Purtroppo è risaputo che le promesse contenute nel programma di governo valgono più o meno quanto le opinioni personali del suo Premier, costantemente sballottato e ricattato da Rifondazione Comunista e dal segretario del Pds D'Alema. In parole povere: niente federalismo, era solo un truccetto per guadagnare voti. E questo non l'hanno certo capito soltanto milioni di italiani, ma prima di tutti l'irascibile Umberto Bossi, il quale ha pensato ad una contromisura che acutizzasse la crisi in merito al problema dell'unità del Paese. Da qui l'idea della secessione, un vero e proprio processo di separazione più o meno violenta (a seconda della resistenza dello Stato "centralista" di Roma) che dovrebbe rendere la Repubblica Indipendente della Padania (La parte d'Italia a nord del fiume Po) una nazione a sé stante. Il "piano" del leader, che grottescamente si paragona addirittura a Gandhi, è quello di invitare la popolazione del Nord alla rivolta. Dapprima si bruceranno i libretti d'abbonamento alla Rai, la televisione statale per la quale ogni famiglia paga duecentomila lire annue. Poi si passerà all'abbattimento dei ripetitori che danno voce ai "terroni". Nel frattempo, il quindici settembre, i padani si schiereranno lungo il Po e qui giureranno fedeltà allo Stato nascente. Un centinaio di seggi elettorali dislocati lungo il fiume forniranno l'opportunità di votare i rappresentanti del popolo presso il neonato "Parlamento del Nord", la cui sede designata è Venezia. A quel punto i prefetti mandati dal governo centrale verranno invitati ad andarsene e incomincerà la rivolta fiscale, cioè nessuno pagherà più le tasse alle autorità di Roma.

Se pensate che l'idea di aizzare la popolazione di un terzo dell'Italia contro un governo incerto per giungere all'indipendenza sia balzana, offensiva o priva di futuro, temo che vi stiate ingannando. Non tanto perchè davvero a metà di settembre qualcuno dovrà riscrivere la storia

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AVE PADANIA?

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della Penisola, quanto piuttosto per l'efficacia strategica del "ciclone" Bossi. Da un lato, e questo è incontestabile, solo una minima parte della popolazione padana è davvero disposta a seguire alla lettera il *diktat* leghista, sebbene la mente del progetto prometta milioni di persone pronte alla rivoluzione. Gli industriali piccoli e medi, gli intellettuali e molti cittadini comuni non si trovano d'accordo su questo punto. Resta però vero che il successo che il partito del Nord ha avuto negli ultimi anni è in gran parte dipeso dalla sua forza dirompente e dalla capacità di distraccarsi nettamente nei toni e nei contenuti dai partiti tradizionali. Quando gli scandali di Tangentopoli infangavano il buon nome di tutti i movimenti politici "storici", la Lega trovava agevolmente uno spiraglio (addirittura una voragine) verso la popolarità. E già allora lo faceva con affermazioni esagerate, violente, estreme e talvolta volgari, tanto che più d'uno dei suoi avversari ha indicato in Bossi un potenziale nuovo Mussolini. Mi sia consentito di irridere a quelli che liquidano il leader leghista con una scrollata di spalle ("è troppo assurdo perchè abbia seguito") o una feroce stroncatura storica ("è la minaccia di una nuova dittatura"). Entrambe queste posizioni sono esattamente le migliori condizioni per l'affermazione del progetto di una Padania indipendente. La verità è che la secessione è un esempio perfetto di "finta".

Nella scherma è uso dei contendenti simulare con gesti palesi un attacco di un certo tipo, inducendo l'avversario a mettere in atto la difesa corrispondente. Senonchè a quel punto si rettifica la propria manovra, spiazzando così l'opponente e trafiggendolo. In un certo senso, questo è ciò che caratterizza la strategia di Umberto Bossi: costruire periodicamente un vero e proprio caso politico, rilasciare dichiarazioni estreme ("la secessione è il punto di coagulo della storia..."), insultare gli avversari, promettere rivoluzioni anche armate,

addirittura omicidi (è successo con le minacce ad un giudice prima e alla ex presidente della Camera Irene Pivetti ultimamente). Poi? Poi più nulla, ma nel frattempo l'apparato delle Istituzioni consolidate si mobilita e concede alcuni punti importanti per non alienarsi il consenso delle masse. Alla fine l'ira del roco Umberto sembra placarsi, ma solo per riesplodere in capo a pochi giorni. Simile ad una madre affettuosa ma apparentemente incontentabile, Bossi "sgrida" il sistema politico italiano e lo punzecchia continuamente, sadicamente, per indurlo a muoversi lentamente nella direzione desiderata.

I nostri concittadini all'estero possono ben riposare tranquilli, perchè il 15 settembre non leggeranno sui loro giornali che la piccola Italia è stata resa ancora più piccola da una guerra di secessione. Ma il futuro riserva delle sorprese. La Lega Nord ha già ottenuto, in anni di strepiti e minacce, che l'attuale governo di Sinistra arrivasse ad includere il federalismo nei punti da discutere in programma. Di per sè si tratta di un risultato impensabile fino pochi mesi fa, quando Prodi, D'Alema e Bertinotti vedevano nel capo dei "lumbard" un pazzo farneticante razzista. Oggi però Bossi si è reso conto che senza un'ulteriore scossa da elettroshock la nostra classe dirigente nasconderebbe in fondo ad un remoto cassetto il progetto di un'Italia federale. Così se n'è uscito con l'idea della Secessione. Non è un'ipotesi concreta e credo che nemmeno colui che l'ha partorita la ritenga ragionevole o realizzabile; ma sotto il profilo della pura strategia è degna del miglior Machiavelli. Se il fine è rendere progressivamente più autonomo il Nord del Paese, motore industriale della nazione, allora il vessillo minaccioso della guerra civile rappresenta il mezzo perfetto per raggiungerlo.

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Gasperi non impediva a due partiti marxisti di dirigere e fomentare il malcontento. L'Occidente guardava con crescente preoccupazione comunisti e socialisti giocare quello che era in tutti i sensi un doppiogioco: stavano nel governo e contemporaneamente incitavano disordini contro lo Stato. L'Italia disponeva di forze dell'ordine terribilmente impreparate a scoraggiare un'insurrezione e il potenziale per una sfida violenta alla nuova Repubblica cresceva assieme ai piani per la stabilizzazione. De Gasperi si rivolse all'America per cercare aiuto in questa situazione minacciosa; ma alla fine del 1946 l'interesse del governo e del pubblico americano per l'Italia aveva toccato il punto minimo, proprio nel momento in cui la situazione del Paese era più grave. Nè il Congresso nè il popolo americano sembravano preparati a finanziare l'Europa liberata. E in questa situazione si formò la "lobby Italia".

Il giudice Felix Forte del Massachusetts, il primo presidente nazionale dell'Ordine dei figli d'Italia (OSIA) ad esser nato in America, vi ebbe un ruolo fondamentale. Trovò appoggiata base attraverso una rete di sezioni locali in tutto il Paese. Un altro leader eminente fu l'organizzatore sindacale Luigi Antonini lo stesso che insieme con Fiorello La Guardia, era stato all'origine del grande scisma dell'Ordine nel 1926 sul tema del fascismo, seguito dalla formazione di "una struttura parallela" con centrale a New York. Il consiglio unito del lavoro italoamericano aveva già forti legami con il movimento sindacale in Italia (più tardi avrebbe avuto un ruolo importante nella scissione del Partito socialista italiano) e il nuovo nemico comune servì a mettere insieme le diverse tendenze ideologiche dell'Ordine. Lo scisma finì nel 1943 con la riammissione di decine di sezioni dissidenti. La terza personalità importante fu Generoso Pope, editore del quotidiano *Il Progresso di New York*. Il suo riavvicinamento con Antonini permise a questo triumvirato di diventare un potente gruppo di pressione per la democrazia postbellica in Italia.

La "lobby Italia" diventò un problema politico per Truman fin dai primi giorni della sua amministrazione. Essa si allecò con coloro che, nel governo e fuori, avevano preoccupato

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La Repubblica Italiana

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pazioni geopolitiche, strategiche e umanitarie sulle conseguenze del collasso economico dell'Italia.

Anche per rispondere a queste pressioni, gli Stati Uniti cominciarono a rafforzare la posizione del governo De Gasperi con gesti di appoggio aperto. Truman promise che il contributo dell'Italia allo sforzo bellico degli Alleati sarebbe stato tenuto presente al momento della conclusione del trattato di pace. L'amministrazione informò gli italoamericani dei suoi sforzi per trattare un armistizio equo di fronte alle pretese sovietiche. Ma questi gesti non bastavano alla "lobby Italia". Gli italiani a loro volta si resero conto che avrebbero potuto difendere i propri interessi appoggiandosi sui leader italoamericani per mantenere la pressione. "Comitati per una giusta pace per l'Italia" furono organizzati con forti toni polemicamente antisovietici e nel 1946 una missione guidata da Antonini e Forte si recò a Parigi sede dei negoziati di pace. La "lobby" ebbe meno successo negli sforzi per influire sui termini della pace (perdite di ricchezza, territori e prestigio per l'Italia) con la sua ratifica da parte del Senato americano: ma durante la susseguente crisi del 1947-48 ebbe un ruolo vitale nel suscitare appoggio popolare per un intervento anticomunista. In questa fase, sia pure servendosi dell'appoggio dei repubblicani, la "lobby" divenne un'alleata dell'amministrazione Truman e i suoi sostenitori ebbero un ruolo importante nella sorprendente e trionfale elezione del presidente nel 1948.

Alla fine del 1946 l'Italia era sull'orlo del collasso economico e politico. La forza crescente del Pci e del suo alleato nel patto di "unità d'azione", il Psi, alzavano lo spettro della presa del potere da parte di un governo estremista e filosovietico. Nel gennaio 1947 Alcide De Gasperi sorvolò l'atlantico e venne in America a perorare la causa dell'Italia. Il Dipartimento di Stato diede a Pope il compito di coordinare la visita. Forte diede il benvenuto al primo ministro italiano in un banchetto di gala dei "sons of Italy" a Cleveland. a New York egli fu ospite dell'organizzazione sindacale e di Antonini. La visita fu un trionfo di *public*

relations: dopo dieci giorni, il primo ministro lasciò il mondo ufficiale di Washington confortato da effusioni di sentimenti filoitaliani. La situazione in Italia si capovoltò ben presto e si radicò un orientamento filoamericano che l'Italia ha mantenuto fino ad oggi. Cruciale per il successo fu il lancio di importanti iniziative americane di aiuti all'Europa: la Dottrina Truman (aiuti ad interim per stabilizzare la democrazia in una sfera di influenza americana), il piano Marshall (l'occasione per i Paesi di riacquistare il controllo dei propri destini attraverso la ricostruzione economica) e l'Alleanza atlantica (partecipazione alla Nato, un'organizzazione per la fides a guida americana).

In seguito al risultato negativo per le sinistre delle elezioni comunali a Roma a metà ottobre, la situazione politica si surriscaldò: la violenza istigata dai comunisti crebbe raggiungendo il suo apice in dicembre. In quel mese De Gasperi la definì una "dichiarazione di guerra" al suo governo e alla democrazia. Truman ammonì che ogni ribellione avrebbe comportato l'intervento americano in base agli obblighi stabiliti nel trattato di pace di Parigi di proteggere le istituzioni democratiche e, contemporaneamente, il Congresso approvò il progetto di aiuto ad interim.

L'Italia si avvicinava rapidamente alle prime elezioni nazionali parlamentari, in calendario per il 18 aprile 1948. La sinistra definì i termini della campagna: De Gasperi stava trasformando l'Italia in un satellite dell'America. Comunisti e socialisti si aspettavano anche di trarre vantaggi elettorali dalla penosa lentezza della ripresa economica e la violenza ispirata dai comunisti diminuì al fine di privare i partiti moderati dell'argomento della difesa della legge e dell'ordine.

La "lobby Italia" accelerò la discussione delle iniziative americane. Nello stesso tempo l'organizzazione sindacale di Antonini fruttò i contrasti fra la sinistra e i moderati in seno al Psi, sfociata nella scissione e nella nascita di due partiti, i socialisti e i socialdemocratici. Un contributo incalcolabile alla campagna elettorale venne dalla iniziativa di un leader della "lobby Italia", George Spatuzza dell'Illinois, egli incitò tutti i cittadini americani di origine italiana a scrivere lettere ai parenti e agli amici in Italia

invitandoli ad "opporsi al totalitarismo comunista, avere fiducia, credere nel futuro dell'Italia, credere nella sincerità dell'America, nei suoi sentimenti umanitari e nella sua amicizia disinteressata". Il Progresso di Pope appoggiò l'iniziativa e così fecero le gerarchie cattoliche americane e la stampa.

Intanto il governo italiano si preparava per le elezioni e per la possibilità di una guerra civile. I partiti minori in Italia si strinsero attorno a De Gasperi di fronte alla minaccia di una insurrezione. Un copo di Stato comunista nella vicina Cecoslovacchia alla fine di febbraio produsse, come risposta, la proibizione delle attività paramilitari della sinistra. Ma quest'ultima era ben organizzata e continuava a sfruttare le "interferenze americane" nella vita politica italiana chiedendo che l'Italia si mantenesse neutrale nella contrapposizione, che si andava allargando, fra Est e Ovest. Per tutto questo tempo continuavano a giungere le lettere dall'America in tale numero che le poste italiane furono obbligate a stabilire turni straordinari per consentirne la consegna. Il Vaticano fu galvanizzato dall'azione americana e Papa Pio XII prese posizione personalmente nella campagna elettorale: dai pulpiti delle chiese italiane si levarono appelli contro il comunismo ateo.

Con l'aiuto degli Stati Uniti, De Gasperi trasformò le elezioni del 1948 in un referendum sul comunismo. I temi economici passarono in secondo piano: De Gasperi martellava sulle scelte fondamentali: democrazia o totalitarismo, cristianesimo o ateismo, scelta di campo tra Est e Ovest. Il popolo italiano rispose con una sonante vittoria per la Democrazia cristiana: il 48,5 per cento del voto popolare e la maggioranza assoluta in Parlamento. De Gasperi avrebbe potuto governare anche senza la sinistra moderata.

Il 2 giugno 1996 è un anniversario speciale: è la pietra miliare di mezzo secolo su un cammino di libertà e giustizia per tutti, che ancora le nostre due Repubbliche percorrono come alleate e amiche.

[On. Dominic Massaro è un giudice della Corte suprema dello Stato di New York.]

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