

Italy at the crossroads

The “Conservative Revolution” in Italy: from the Northern League to “Clean Hands.” Conclusion of a series by Claudio Celani.

Part I, in the June 23, 1995 issue, described how Italy has been governed since 1993 by unelected technocrats from the Banca d'Italia (except for the short interlude of TV magnate Silvio Berlusconi), whose aim is to so drastically weaken the power of the central State, as to make it possible to physically dismember the Italian nation.

The oligarchy creates the League

As we stated at the beginning, Mussolinian Fascism is only one of the many jacobin populisms that the oligarchy has used in history to gain and maintain its power.

The Northern League (Lega Nord) is a modern form of this same phenomenon. Even if most of Italy's political forces have embraced issues and elements of the Conservative Revolution, the birth and the growth of the League is a case study for grasping how a jacobin movement can be created from nothing and increase its consensus by inducing mass psychosis in the population.

The League was formally born in the Veneto region in 1979, as a movement that claimed a territorial identity corresponding to the old Republic of Venice. The leaders of Liga Veneta (“liga” is Venetian dialect for the Italian “lega,” league) believe in the special qualities of the Venetian people, supposedly particularly skilled in trading and therefore more able to produce wealth than inhabitants of other Italian regions. This ideology was picked up by centers such as the Cini Foundation (whose president until last year was the chairman of Olivetti Corporation), which organized meetings in Venice in the 1980s in order to promote the rise of an anti-State movement with the potential to grow on a mass scale.

To achieve that purpose, they needed two ingredients: racism against southern Italians (many of whom emigrated to the North in the 1950s in search of jobs) and the characterization of the ruling class as “corrupt and pro-South.” The racist campaign started in 1983, when the Liga got 4% of the votes in the political elections.

In January 1983, the *Gazzettino di Venezia* published a letter signed by a certain Maria Pia Forcolin, who wrote that the blood donated by southern Italians contaminated the Venetian race, because it comes from “inferior and degenerate races.” The letter went on to state that “Venetian women

must be prevented from marrying *terroni* [derogative for southerners], thus generating bastard offspring.” Mrs. Forcolin was clearly an invented name. But the *Gazzettino* editors, in publishing the letter, had unleashed a hysterical debate.

When Umberto Bossi founded the Lega Lombarda (Lombard League), after having been converted to “federalism” by the head of Unione Valdostaine (the Val d’Aosta regionalist party) Bruno Salvadori, his movement did not have much political success and had to fight for survival. In 1986 the Liga Veneta kept Bossi from closing shop with a 50-million-lira loan. The following year brought a qualitative leap: The Lombard League broke through in the provinces of Bergamo and Varese, north of Milan. A very important player entered the game, helping to destroy the League's political opponents through “corruption” scandals: the first “Clean Hands” operation, conducted in Bergamo by Antonio Di Pietro from 1981 to 1987.

‘Clean hands’ or black hands?

Antonio Di Pietro was a young policeman of limited cultural background and a crude conception of law and order. His unorthodox methods of fighting small-scale criminals brought him a modest success in Milan, where at a certain point he decided to become a prosecutor. His idol was Francesco Cossiga. When all of Italy's magistrates decided to strike after President Cossiga publicly insulted them, Di Pietro was the only one who reported for work.

Di Pietro was picked up by the Cossiga faction and used as a dupe in the “Conservative Revolution.” Bergamo was Prosecutor Di Pietro's laboratory for experimenting with the methods he would later apply in Milan. Anti-corruption investigations were used not so much to achieve justice, but rather as part of a strategy whose main feature is a media campaign to manipulate the attitudes of the population. The script is always the same: Since politicians take kickbacks from private companies in return for favoring them in bidding for public jobs, it is not hard to catch a few of them in the act. In Bergamo, a daily newspaper, *Bergamo Oggi*, regularly leaked “exclusive” information on Di Pietro's alleged secret investigations, and used them to support a campaign against “the political class” as a whole. The target of

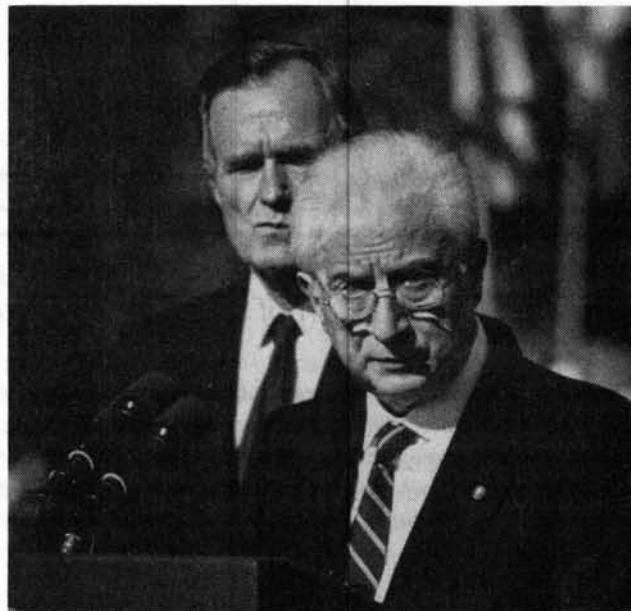


Di Pietro's investigations in Bergamo was the Socialist Party, a very easy one since its leaders cultivated a public image of "arrogance of power." No wonder that in 1986 the League's votes in Bergamo skyrocketed.

Bergamo, a city which has been under the oligarchical rule of the Republic of Venice for 300 years, has a long tradition of jacobinism as a form of social control. When Giuseppe Garibaldi started his Sicily expedition, in 1860, Bergamo supplied the strongest contingent of "Red Shirts." More than a century later, in the 1970s, when terrorist movements spread on a threatening scale in Italy, Bergamo was again the city where the largest number of terrorists came from: 130 in all.

The real power in the city of Bergamo—the financial oligarchy which had supported the rise of Craxi's Socialist Party to break the strength of the two mass-based parties, the Christian Democracy and the Communist Party—was untouched by Di Pietro's investigations. The apex of this power structure was Giampiero Pesenti, owner of a large empire of corporations, banks, and insurance companies. Pesenti, like the Agnellis and the De Benedettis, answers to Enrico Cuccia, the chairman of Mediobanca and manager, on behalf of the City of London, of most of Italy's oligarchical family fortunes.

In Bergamo, Antonio Di Pietro won a social promotion:



"The Northern League received from Cossiga, the highest authority of the State who turned against the State, formidable support in their recruitment campaign." Left: 1994 campaign posters in Milan for the populist/racist Northern League proclaim: "1994, The Dictatorship Falls; Free the North; Federalism at Hand," and "There's a Revolution to Finish." Right: Italy's Francesco Cossiga was backed by George Bush at the White House in 1989, when both were Presidents of their respective countries.

He was allowed to marry into the family of lawyer Arbace Mazzoleni, the former protégé of Francesco Carnelutti, the attorney who, as we reported in Part I of this article, smoothly made the transition from carrying out the reform of the Civil Code ordered under Mussolini in 1941, to heading the law firm that handled the postwar political trials in Rome. The Mazzoleni family belongs to Bergamo's elite, together with the Counts Pecori-Giraldi.

In 1987 Di Pietro was transferred to Milan. Thanks to a new reform of Italy's criminal law, which gave extraordinary powers to prosecutors, especially pertaining to pre-trial detention, Di Pietro was ready to start what would be called the "Clean Hands" investigation and made him a national hero in the minds of millions of deluded Italians. The signal for Di Pietro came in 1991 when, as part of the Thatcher-Bush strategy against Germany and Italy, President Cossiga started a public smear campaign against the Parliament and all national institutions, calling the political parties "Cosa Nostra." The ruinous impact of Cossiga's behavior was underestimated by his former colleagues. Only the Communist Party, the PCI, opened an impeachment procedure, but it failed because the Christian Democracy wanted to avoid an early institutional crisis. Thus, every day Cossiga spewed out his insults in the press and television, against the government (especially Giulio Andreotti), the Parliament, the political

parties, and the courts, accusing all of them of being "corrupt" and serving personal interests instead of the common good. The Northern League received from Cossiga, the highest authority of the State who turned against the State, formidable support in their recruitment campaign.

Cossiga at the same time had a covert agreement with the "Venetian" faction in the Communist Party, which had always seen in the Catholic Church and the Catholic party, the Christian Democracy, their enemy. This faction was ready to support Di Pietro's operation aimed at the destruction of anti-communist political parties and won the majority in the PCI, which in the meantime officially abandoned the name "communist" and called itself PDS (Democratic Left Party). Thus, the head of the Milan Court, leftist Saverio Borrelli, gave the green light to Di Pietro and created a pool of three more prosecutors for him: Francesco Davigo, Gerardo d'Ambrosio, and Gherardo Colombo.

Prepared for months, Di Pietro's spectacular "Clean Hands" operation started officially on Feb. 17, 1992, with the arrest of Mario Chiesa, the manager of a Socialist Party-linked hospice. The real turning point came in the April 5 political elections, when the Northern League reaped the protest vote, fed by a real economic crisis but also by the Cossiga-Clean Hands uproar. Bossi's League emerged as the second party in northern Italy, and the first party in the major urban centers of Milan, Pavia, Varese, Como, and Sondrio, plus tens of minor cities.

Supported by "public opinion" and the League vote, in the following months the Clean Hands operation demolished the anti-communist parties. About 2,000 politicians, local administrators, and managers were arrested in one year. Out of all this, only one trial was held, concerning illegal financing of the Christian Democracy and the Socialist Party coming from the ENI and Montedison corporations, for which the two party leaders, Bettino Craxi and Arnaldo Forlani, were held responsible.

Clean Hands is a media operation. As in Bergamo, Di Pietro et al. are assisted by a bevy of press and television journalists. Especially the daily *Corriere della Sera* and the weekly *Espresso*, belonging respectively to the Agnelli and the Caracciolo groups, played a key role in leaking records of interrogations of politicians, which were obviously given to them by Di Pietro's office. Nobody ever cared to investigate how the press systematically got secret information from the prosecutor's office. Instead, the political class underwent a trial-by-media and every politician or public manager investigated was forced to resign under pressure of "public opinion," even before being indicted.

Another role was played by the newspaper *L'Indipendente*. Its publisher was Vittorio Feltri, the same publisher of the newspaper *Bergamo Oggi* during Di Pietro's stay in Bergamo. *L'Indipendente* ran the most demagogic coverage, supporting Northern League campaigns against centralism and using Di Pietro's operation to call for dumping the whole

political class. Di Pietro was helped in his investigation on illegal party financing by Kroll Associates, the so-called "Wall Street CIA."

Former Turin city councilman Sergio Scarrone, in reconstructing the short experience of MARP (Movement for Piedmont Regional Autonomy) which initiated a League-like movement in Piedmont in the 1950s, recently stated: "What did we lack in order to be successful? Scandals, Di Pietro, and Clean Hands."

Miglio, the guarantor for the League

Italian voters would not have voted for a movement headed by a zombie such as Umberto Bossi just because of scandals hitting established parties. You needed somebody to "guarantee" for Bossi. Here some "notables" joined the League camp, to leave it afterwards, when it had played the role it was supposed to play.

One such notable is Gianfranco Miglio, a former instructor at Milan's Catholic University and so-called constitutional expert. Miglio joined Bossi in 1989 and elaborated the primitive secessionist League demagogy into the so-called "federalist project." In 1994, once the first phase of the "Conservative Revolution" was over and after the League, in order to keep its popular base, shifted from the alliance with the right-wing bloc into an alliance with the PDS, Miglio left Bossi with fanfare.

Before elaborating his project of "federalist constitution," with a Switzerland-like Italy, divided into three cantons, Miglio dreamed of a "Decider" who could suspend the Constitution for ten years, during which Pinochet-like sacrifices would be foisted on the Italians. Today, Miglio cultivates his image of cruel punisher of "corruption," but he started his career with a person who became legendary as the king of the corrupt: Eugenio Cefis. Cefis, a partisan with British-controlled guerrilla formations during World War II, was put on top of ENI, the Italian state oil company, after the founder, Enrico Mattei, was assassinated in 1962. Cefis brought back Miglio (who had already been at ENI and was forced to leave because of disagreements with Mattei), with the task of re-educating the ENI managers. Re-educate means that they should start to believe not in national welfare as Mattei believed, but simply in "profit." That is exactly the beginning of corruption. Today, after having contributed to corrupting the State, Miglio, an Anglophile by training and a philosophical follower of Thomas Hobbes, wants to abolish it. A book by journalist Giorgio Ferrari tells an interesting episode: In spring 1945, when Winston Churchill visited Lake Como, in search of the famous Mussolini papers where allegedly his own letters to the Duce were kept, he was hosted at Villa Miglio, in the village of Damaso. Of course, for Italy the war was finished, but the country was still full of armed Fascists. Therefore Churchill did not choose any villa. The Miglios must have belonged to a safe circle. Miglio's father had bought the house from the sister of Sydney Sonnino,

a famous, early 20th-century politician whose mother was British, and a cult object for Italy's Anglophile free-marketeers (and the Cossiga group to which Miglio belongs), to be counterposed to the "Statist" tradition of Giovanni Giolitti. Contrary to Giolitti, who wanted to keep Italy neutral in 1915, Sonnino signed, as Italian foreign minister, the Triple Entente with Britain, and gave Italy 1 million deaths.

Besides Miglio, other important academic backing for the League came from the Thatcherite American Edward Luttwak, from Georgetown University's Angelo Codevilla, and from British establishment mouthpieces such as *The Economist*.

Luttwak, author of a book entitled *Technique of the Coup d'Etat*, is promoted by circles like the Sella Foundation of Monteluca, led by a descendant of Count Quintino Sella. Sella was the prime minister under whom, in 1870, the Piedmontese conquered the Papal State and entered Rome. He was the first budget-cutter in the history of united Italy. Count Maurizio Sella, who divides his time between Milan and London, is the owner of the largest single-family-owned bank in Italy, Banca Sella. Sella invited Luttwak to hold an anti-State conference at his foundation, introducing him as an adviser to President Clinton. In the same way, Luttwak was publicized by *L'Espresso*, which ran two of his pro-League articles in August 1993.

Even the son of the last King of Italy, Victor Emmanuel IV, declared on March 17, 1993, to the daily *L'Indipendente*: "Our country is undergoing a terrible crisis . . . the Leagues are the only clean and modern thing. They are the normal popular reaction to the clique of Italian politicians built up to cheat the people."

Today Count Sella is no longer a Leaguist but he heads the "Freedoms Association" (Associazione per le Libertà) where he collected members of Parliament belonging to all so-called moderate parties. The aim is to prepare the future right-wing Liberal Party, to counterpose to the left-wing Liberal Party.

The leftist conservative revolution

Bossi's Northern League is now allied with the "Left," composed of the PDS and what the Italian press calls "bushes," an archipelago of smaller parties including the left-wing split from the former Christian Democracy. Although the alliance has a tactical nature and, as things now stand, the allies will try to kill each other the first chance they have, inside the PDS there is a strong "Conservative Revolution" faction which is pushing for the League program.

Head of this faction is the mayor of Venice, Massimo Cacciari. A candidate to lead the future left-wing Liberal Party, otherwise called Democratic Party, Cacciari has been a follower of the proto-Nazi philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche since 1968 when, around the magazine *Quaderni Rossi*, he participated in the creation of Italy's drug-sex-rock movement. Today, Cacciari is behind a club around the Adelphi

publishing house, led by occultist Roberto Calasso and born out of the salon of the famous Anglophile banker Raffaele Mattioli, the founder of Cuccia's Mediobanca.

One of Adelphi's specialties is the "left-wing" interpretation of Nietzsche. Adelphi published Nietzsche's complete works in Italian. In his book *Gli Adelphi della Dissoluzione*, author Maurizio Blondet demonstrates that Adelphi's cultural message is openly satanist. Blondet interviews Cacciari, who declares that he hopes for the coming of the Antichrist. "The Pope must stop being the Kathecon," Cacciari bursts out, explaining that Kathecon is "what holds back the Antichrist from its full manifestation." Coherent with his nihilist philosophy, Cacciari calls (like the League) for a Constitutional Convention to rewrite Italy's Constitution in, of course, a "federalist" approach. And like his right-wing American colleague Newt Gingrich, leftist Cacciari believes in the "Third Wave," the coming of a cybernetic society which will replace the industrial one, and the disappearance of the working class.

The Berlusconi phenomenon

Although media magnate Silvio Berlusconi won the 1994 political elections because he appeared to many as the most reasonable alternative to the League's irrationalism and the PDS-supported "prosecutors' jacobinism," the movement he founded (Forza Italia) carries the same self-destructive germ, called populism.

Berlusconi tried to ride the free-market mania and the League's fiscal revolt, at the same time imposing his personal imprint and slowing down privatization. This irked the City of London. But Berlusconi increased an aspect of the Conservative Revolution inaugurated by Cossiga, a populist style which puts more emphasis on the emotional relations between the "leader" and the population, than on the representative system formed by Parliament and the political parties.

Berlusconi plays into the manipulation of public opinion by identifying his enemies as "communism." To state that a PDS-supported government is communism is ridiculous. As a matter of fact, the PDS supported both the Ciampi and the Dini governments, which are not communist but International Monetary Fund governments. Berlusconi, instead of exposing the alliance between the IMF and the post-communists, accuses the "communists" of running the jacobin prosecutors' party. There is a bit of truth in all he says, but the end result is false. In the present situation, the only alternative is a development perspective, which means war with the IMF and the City of London, to which the non-jacobin faction in the PDS could also be recruited. In the 1994 election campaign, Berlusconi promised to create 2 million jobs and went so far as to publish a program of large infrastructural projects in his newspaper, including the bridge over the Strait of Messina. But the most prominent Forza Italia economic spokesman is Antonio Martino, the only Italian member of the Mont Pelerin Society.