

THE CIRCULATION DROPS  
WITH EVERY OBITUARY THEY PUBLISH

Foreign-language newspapers have always represented a problem for the United States, but it's a problem that soon will be no more. America has always had a wealth of publications and each linguistic community has had its own distinct press with its distinct history: however, all languages went through a similar journey that matches more or less the history of the immigrant groups they represented. The rise and fall of foreign-language news media follows the various groups' economic, cultural and political evolution; and, finally, their progressive integration into the nation's mainstream. With each decade and each new school that is built, with each struggle that picks winners and losers after imposing on them the same trials, the number of readers of foreign-language publications decreases. The human material that descends from different races, traditions, cultures, religions and languages is bent, reshaped, recycled and ground up by societal forces and mandatory public education until it is assimilated and begins to circulate in the country's vascular system. There are still some small benign cysts but they are dying of starvation.

With the exception of new arrivals from Puerto Rico and Canada, the foreign-language press today can acquire only a few thousand new readers every year.

The original purpose of old-style Italian-language dailies was to respond to the needs of a public of immigrants who did not know English well (or not at all) and sought information about the country they had just left. That audience is almost gone: each obituary printed in one of those newspapers means one fewer subscriber because their heirs in the new generation don't read Italian and don't really seek news from and about Italy anymore. Today's immigrants, Italians included, have no reason to buy locally published newspapers since they can get original dailies by air mail from Europe in twenty-four hours.

The only reason for the existence of an ethnic press in the United States is to serve minorities that have not yet been fully absorbed into society. For them, the purpose is not to get news from the Old Country, which is getting fainter by the day both in interest and memories,

but to get news about their own new society, which speaks English and consists of community life based on social and sports events, on the parish or the temple and, in some cases, on the political club that sponsors the elections of descendants from the same roots who promise to defend the rights of the newer immigrants of the same origin.

Here are some data. In 1884, in the United States there were 525 periodicals in German including ~~sixty~~<sup>seven</sup> daily newspapers. In the same year, the Italian diaspora supported seven periodicals, two of which were dailies. In 1930 the German language periodicals were down to 171, in 1950 to seventy, in 1959 to ~~sixty~~<sup>four</sup>. It has been a constant decline, also accelerated by the wars against Germany. In comparison, Italian-language periodicals in 1900 reached ~~thirty~~<sup>five</sup>, including three dailies. In 1939 there were ~~eighty~~<sup>six</sup> periodicals with six dailies (twenty-one periodicals were already in a mix of Italian and English.) The true history of Italian-language press in the United States—without resorting to clichés—would be very hard to reconstruct. One would have to delve deeply into an unpleasant, smelly reality, often sticky and hot like blackout in the summer (a comparison that is both adequate and literal). I am not very familiar with the kind of press that is called *colonial journalism*: I have only heard about it and I will not venture an opinion.

The decline of the Italian press started after World War II: in 1959 the periodicals dropped to ~~fifty~~<sup>two</sup> with five dailies. A few statistics will give an idea of the current situation. In 1930 in New York there were three Italian language dailies: the *Bollettino della Sera* with a circulation of 30,433 copies; the *Progresso Italo-Americano* with 99,391; and the *Corriere d'America*<sup>1</sup> with 55,515. In the entire country the circulation of Italian dailies was around 220,000 copies. Today only one newspaper is left, Fortune Pope's *Progresso*. It is impossible to know

1 *Il Bollettino della Sera* was published in New York starting in 1898.

• *Il Corriere d'America* was published in New York from 1923 to 1931. Its managing editor (*direttore*) was Luigi Barzini, Sr.

• All three newspapers were owned by Generoso Pope.

2 Fortune Pope (1918-1996). Publisher of *Il Progresso Italo-Americano* and of *The National Enquirer*. He was the son of Generoso Pope who is commonly but erroneously credited with founding *Il Progresso*. The founder and first editor of *Il Progresso* was Carlo Barsotti (1850-1927), who was also the founder of the *Italian*

in italics

insert hyphen

insert hyphen

insert hyphen

insert hyphen

insert hyphen

insert hyphen

its circulation for the newspaper no longer publishes data, contrary to the practice of all serious periodicals in the United States. A generous estimate would guess about 50,000 copies. Between 1930 and 1960, despite the new post-WW II immigration and the population growth in New York, there was a net loss of 170,000 readers, more than three quarters from the peak years. Much could be said about the inadequate format and content of Italian-language periodicals; however, it is clear that the decreased circulation is due primarily to the larger picture of social and educational policies that apply pressure on all the organs of linguistic minorities in the United States.

For my Italian readers I just want to report an interesting fact: while Italian-language press is on the way out in the United States, waning in terms of relevance and circulation, a new kind of periodicals is emerging, produced by the new English-speaking generations of Italian Americans who communicate only in English and therefore need English language media. Normally these periodicals are weeklies rather than dailies, thus they function as complementary organs. It is also worth noting that several of these new publications in English are born in smaller urban centers, such as Philadelphia, Boston and Hartford, Connecticut, which in the past were very important hubs of Italian immigration. Thus far their circulation is limited to the local areas, however, some even ship a few copies to Italy where several thousands Italian Americans now live after having moved back to enjoy their savings and Social Security checks or pensions. These *reverse immigrants* want to maintain ties with the places where they worked, saved, raised a family; and where their children, grand children, relatives and friends still live. A nation-wide periodical of this kind, capable of penetrating the Italian communities from Seattle to San Francisco to New Orleans to Boston, does not exist yet. This might happen in the future but so far no visionary mind has conceived it, nor are there entrepreneurs willing to take a chance. Most of all, what is missing is a coalition of local minorities with the *intelligenza* [sic] and an educated Italian American community.

*New York, May 21, 1961*

## ITALIAN NEWSPAPERS IN AMERICA

Foreign-language newspapers in America, from Ukrainian to Japanese—not to mention the most obvious ones like Italian and German—were born to meet the immigrants' need for information about relevant events in their countries of origin. It was the only source of information available, since they couldn't read English and— even if they could—the American press ~~would~~ barely mention those faraway places. Moreover, the mainline press completely ignored what was taking place in ~~immigrants'~~ neighborhoods. Naturally, as these immigrants were absorbed and their feelings for and memories of the old country vanished, the foreign-language press became progressively smaller and focused mostly on the local issues that ~~effected~~ people where they lived. But, there is another factor that must be considered in order to understand the decline of foreign-language press: the journalists. Initially they had all been educated in the country of origin, whose language they could write fluently. Speaking specifically about the Italian community, today it is practically impossible to find an Italian American, educated in America, who can write correct and proper Italian. Others, educated in Italian schools, have lost the ability to express themselves with precision and fluidity. Historically, this was similar to what happened to German immigration which was arguably the most educated to come to America. With reference to this community, in a general atmosphere of decline ~~two different~~ phenomena took place, representative of distinct traditions. After the fall of Nazism, the German population of New York split into two groups: one followed publications that represented, with moderation, the German tradition; the other, mostly Jews of German origin, gravitated around periodicals that reflected a world-wide agenda. In addition there were several periodicals published in Yiddish, the language (or dialect) of the German and Eastern-European Jewry, with a long tradition of renown literary works. Italians, who never had to confront this kind of divisions, were never forced—psychologically or otherwise—to learn English. There are still elderly people in New York

delete word insert < word >

insert < the >

delete (effected) insert < effected >

delete (>) insert (< >)

who speak only the dialect of Campobasso or Terlizzi,<sup>1</sup> interspersed with a few rough English words; but in general America has been able to absorb the immigrants with the assimilating prowess of big snakes that don't bite their preys but smother them then swallow them whole. This is what mandatory education did to children who, once they had learned English (or American), would become a model, but also a threat, for their parents who never managed to learn the language. Children were also instrumental in keeping and anchoring their parents to this country, preventing them from returning as they had originally dreamt of doing: *fare l'America* [to do America] (that is, to get rich) and then return to Sorrento<sup>2</sup> (or the native village) with a nice nest egg to show off to those who stayed behind.

The new Italian American press, as I mentioned before, is written and read primarily by the new generations, children or grand children of the first poor immigrants. The distinction between these cohorts is very important, not only in terms of language but also economic status. They are better off than their parents and belong to a different social class: they own a house and often a small business; and are members of professional associations. An ever increasing number has gone even farther, especially in business but also in the legal profession and in politics, including the court system (in America judges are elected officials.) In the medical field they are more commonly general practitioners rather than specialists. They are present in considerable numbers in education, especially at the secondary level. Some have achieved great stature in the arts, in particular in painting, sculpting and music (less so in architecture). Many are active labor organizers. Rarely do they excel in theoretical mathematics and scientific research. Many of these choices are due to the natural predisposition of Italians, such as an inclination for the arts, but many are also due to the socio-economic circumstances of their families of origin, most of which urgently needed children to start earning money when still young. Additional reasons are the resistance and diffidence on the part of the

insert < >

<sup>1</sup> Campobasso: regional capital of Molise. Terlizzi: small town in the province of Bari in Apulia.

<sup>2</sup> Ironic reference to the famous song *Torna a Sorrento* [Come Back to Sorrento]. Sorrento is a world-famous resort town on the Gulf of Naples.

rich native Anglo-Saxons toward all immigrants but in particular toward those who did not speak English and did not belong to Protestant churches.<sup>3</sup> It is impossible to conduct an accurate survey since there has never been a serious and credible census of the success stories of Italians in the United States. Millions of dollars have been spent for banquets, monuments and festivals of all kinds, but not even a modest amount was ever spent for a publication that could be the equivalent of the *Golden Book of Italian Americans*.

Returning to the topic of the Italian American press, there are some middle-brow publications written both in Italian and in English, a notable example of which is the *Gazzetta del Massachusetts*,<sup>4</sup> published in Boston by Dr. Giacomo Grillo, a valiant defender of the Italian language and a true journalist who knows how to write about a range of topics, from politics to popular culture. He is also a veritable gold mine of memories and anecdotes about the heroic, and at times sordid,

*colonial* Press that prospered and whithered in a matter of a few years or even months in the neighborhoods of the Little Italies. Grillo is an expert on the history and literature of the United States and is a lively and competent speaker. Another example is the *Italamericain*,<sup>5</sup> a monthly bilingual magazine published in New York that carries the syndicated column of a notable American writer with strong ties to Italy, Igor Cassini (a Georgian name), better known with the nickname Cholly Knickerbocker.<sup>6</sup> Before I start describing these periodicals, I want to alert my readers that we cannot judge them using Italian criteria. At first glance, the *Italian eye* would equate them to small-town newspapers and, at second glance, to gossip magazines. The right perspective must take into account the great difficulties inherent in publishing in a foreign language with a limited target audience that is

3 In Italian the term *Protestante* applies both to Lutheran and Calvinist denominations.

4 *Gazzetta del Massachusetts*. Founded in 1896. After several changes, its current name is *Post-Gazette*.

5 *Italamericain* was a monthly magazine published from July-August, 1952, to August-September, 1968.

6 Igor Cassini (1915-2002). Columnist for the Hearst newspaper chain. He wrote the *Cholly Knickerbocker* column.

no italics

inevitably not part of the country's cultural avant-garde. A reasonable comparison would be an American citizen who arrived in Rome and, with an American eye, judged the local American tabloid,<sup>7</sup> which looks like a provincial American newspaper, despite the fact that Rome can count on a potential readership of at least ten thousand Americans, both permanent residents and visitors; mostly well off or even wealthy; with well paid jobs in the film industry and similar fields. To the contrary, Italian dailies and periodicals in America could never count on a similarly educated and prosperous audience.

The *Gazzetta del Massachusetts* (current name: *Post-Gazette*) was founded by a courageous, energetic and adventurous southern Italian, James Donnarumma, born on December 26, 1874, in San Valentino Torio in the province of Salerno, who had arrived in America at the age of fifteen. It is profoundly different from comparable Italian publications. Boston by now has become a provincial town, which means it no longer has the power and size of other major urban centers. However, it still has a strong cultural tradition and retains financial power. Little of this, however, is present in the *Gazzetta*.

The first sheets in Italian language published in Boston were born in the North End, near the port, where the Irish had first settled. The Irish were pushed out by the Italian immigrants who presently are still dominant in the area. Boston's North End is a typical neighborhood where monuments of the American Revolution, such as Paul Revere's house and graceful Protestant churches—like the Old North Church—are totally surrounded by Italian stores, cafés, restaurants and small businesses. On the sidewalks, local urchins run around like in Naples, yelling at each other in a Bostonian slang. In the earlier days this neighborhood was full of mutual aid societies, notaries public and fraternities devoted to the organization of parades for the patron saints of Irpinia,<sup>8</sup> Sicily, Liguria and, later, Calabria. Those publications reported the names of people who attended banquets, played the pipe for the rich folks in the community who had a paid subscription and, at times, shamed and intimidated the prominent who were not

delete <>> insert <>>

7 *Rome Daily American*. It started publication in 1946 to serve the U.S. Armed Forces still present in Italy after WWII. It closed in 1984 due to financial difficulties.

8 Region of Campania with capital Avellino.

subscribers into buying space for an ad or at least make a donation. Whether the leaflets were named *Giuseppe Garibaldi* or *The Horsefly* or *The Caudine Forks*<sup>9</sup> the content didn't change much.

To this day the Italian American press consists primarily of reports of weddings, baptisms, deaths and trips to Italy. New entries are college degrees and elections to various offices, from judge to city councilman to governor, all signals of the changing fortunes and the position of Italian Americans on the socio-economic ladder. Aside from gossips, the local newspapers are forgettable and carry very little news with the exception of press clips taken from Italian publications that arrive by ship. Yet, in the past, these little newspapers were watering the plant of nationalism. The editors often were dropouts of Italy's preparatory high schools [liceo classico] and they were responsible for transmitting incomplete notions of Ancient Rome and the *Risorgimento*<sup>10</sup> to the children of the southern peasants who had arrived in America lacking even a primary level education. They taught the immigrants the basics of national pride and how to pronounce the names of Dante, Petrarca, Leonardo and Michelangiolo<sup>11</sup> [sic]; names they had never heard

9 Giuseppe Garibaldi (1807-1882), Italy's national hero. Political and military leader, he was one of the major figures of Italy's unification with his band of volunteers, the *Camicie Rosse* [Red Shirts]. He also fought in in Brazil and Uruguay on the side of rebels seeking independence from European powers. He gained the appellation *Hero of Two Worlds*.

<sup>9</sup>Site of a famous battle (321 B.C.E.) in which the Romans suffered a humiliating defeat at the hand of the Samnites. The closest cities to the location today are Caserta and Benevento, in the Campania region. In Italian the expression "to pass through the Forche Caudine" is still frequently used metaphorically to indicate an arduous journey of hard trials and setbacks, similar to "running the gauntlet."

10 *Risorgimento*. Period in the nineteenth-century political, social and cultural movement that led to the unification of Italy. It broadly corresponds to the period of the three Wars of Independence of 1848, 1859 and 1871. Historians also include the take-over of Rome in 1870 and the consequent dismantling of the Papal State.

11 Dante Alighieri (1265-1321). Full name, Durante di Alighiero degli Alighieri. Dante is one of the most celebrated poets in the world's history of literature. Also known in Italy as *Il Divino Poeta* [Divine Poet], or, simply (*Il Poeta*), he is still very much part of Italian schools' curriculum, starting in middle school. His most famous work is *La Divina Commedia* [Divine Comedy].

• Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519). Full name, Leonardo di ser Piero da Vinci. He is unanimously considered one of the world's greatest geniuses of all times. He

Here, insert the footnote about Francesco Petrarca (See footnotes in next page)

delete

insert in italics (< Caudine Forks >)

in italics



before in Italy and that now they would use to defend themselves from the scorn and derision of native Anglo-Saxons. This defensive role, played by even the least respectable of the Italian American press, still continues to this day as demonstrated by the reactions of all the Italian publications in the United States—in English and in Italian—to the recent television broadcast of a drama series on the criminal world of Chicago, which is depicted exclusively as an Italian enterprise.<sup>12</sup> The show was sponsored by some of the most important American companies.

*New York, September 10, 1961*

excelled in an almost infinite number of fields of knowledge and practical endeavors as an artist, scientist, inventor, engineer, architect, musician and philosopher.

• Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374). Poet, inventor of the sonnet. With Dante and Giovanni Boccaccio he is one of the three great writers of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, who, working separately but with a similar agenda, created the basis for a common Italian literary language.

• Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475-1564) *Michelangelo* is the original Tuscan spelling of the name. Michelangelo is one of the most famous and most celebrated artists and architects of the Renaissance.

move this up, after the note on Dante, before Leonardo in italics

12 Most likely it refers to *The Unouchables*, CBS, New York, 1959-1963.

## THE ANARCHISTS' PICNIC

I have written often about the Italian American press. It is a product that cannot be understood without direct experience; something that, once tried, can even be enjoyed with a little effort. But for someone who just arrived from Italy the first approach always produces a rather strange impression. Italians, even the more educated ones, have strange ideas about the population that emigrated from Italy or its descendants. But first we must clarify a fact that is often ignored: the descendants—who are much more numerous than the original migrants—grew up and were schooled in this country, not in Italy; therefore their native language is English and their education is American. Their memories of Italy are filtered through other people's experiences, opinions and contaminations; derived from the image of Italy the way it was fifty or more years ago and very often the way it was in a little southern village.

The Italian American press was born with this framework of reference to serve this population and, therefore, it reflects in every way all the same qualities, shortcomings, limitations and aspirations. The fundamental aspect of its development is the fact that it is becoming more and more Anglophone, while what is left of the Italian-language press is read mostly by people at least 50 years old. It is therefore necessary to view it from this perspective of time and physiology, not from that of the Eternal Italy. One of the most promising signs of the interest by Italian Americans for suitable periodicals in English is the success of Philadelphia's *Italian American Herald*,<sup>1</sup> a very promising weekly. The founder is Dr. Alexander Gregorian, a Romanian<sup>2</sup> who had previously spent many years in Italy as correspondent of British newspapers. The most apparent aspect of this type of press in English, in Italian or mixed languages, is its focus on reporting and celebrating the individual achievements of the descendants of a very humble

insert <has>

replace with <fifty>

replace with <in>

delete < ; > insert < ; >

1 *Italian American Herald*. First published in 1961, it has been renamed *Delaware Valley Italian American News Herald*. It has a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Delaware-Valley-Italian-American-News-Herald/320067254782854>.

2 This is possibly an oversight, in that Gregorian is a common Armenian last name.

people that has collectively made great progress and has attained a very high economical, political and social status. It is a remarkable result, particularly when one considers that, despite the foundations of a democratic system, in America the native dominant class—made of rich Anglo-Saxons—has kept foreign-origin populations away from the recognitions that in a democracy are a tangible proof of success. In the Italian American press we see column after column filled with stories of personal success, from college degrees to elections of judges to college professorships. We can also find, for instance, a baptism celebrated in a cathedral or a wedding reception in a top-notch restaurant. We read the announcement of a trip to Italy by an elderly couple that arrived here penniless thirty years earlier and can now afford to travel first class; and their return to the United States to a crowd of children, grandchildren, nephews and nieces. We should not smile condescendingly as if these were cases of infantile and provincial vanity. Behind the ostentation, there is the revenge against silent social ostracism: along with pride for having overcome hardship, competition and pain. Italians, even cultivated ones, when they look at these people see only their economic success. However, one should bear in mind that immigration was an enormous tragedy with years of hunger, hard work, insecurity, death and—always—humiliations. The recent demonstrations of success could probably be more refined, less flashy and less focused on financial success. But if we look at the term of comparison, namely the country that took in the immigrants, we see that it was itself coarse, crude and purely interested in money; a place where everybody was judged by the size of their bank account. A good summary is, for instance, the impressions of count Carlo Vidua<sup>3</sup> in the first years of the century that were recently revealed in the journal *Italcia*.<sup>4</sup>

Another aspect that surprises Italians who read these periodicals

3 Carlo Vidua, Count of Conzano (1785-1830). In 1825 he visited the United States and met with Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe and President Quincy Adams.

4 *Italcia* is presently the official journal of the American Association of Teachers of Italian (AATI). Joseph Rossi: "The American Myth in the Italian Risorgimento: The Letters from America of Carlo Vidua." *Italcia* 38.3 (1961 Sept.) pp. 227-35.

insert <>>

for the first time is the deep nationalistic tone of the publications. By nationalistic I mean that, without distinctions, the press always supports Italy, whoever may be at the helm of the country at any given moment. In the last century they were first for the Italy of Porta Pia;<sup>5</sup> the next day for the Italy of *Renun Novatum*,<sup>6</sup> and yesterday they were cheering for Fascism. This is a phenomenon that Italians, no matter how well educated, cannot understand. Among the intellectuals puzzled by this mindset were Gaetano Salvemini and Don Luigi Sturzo<sup>7</sup> who were stunned when they found that in a free and democratic country so many of their fellow countrymen, even without the bombardment of Fascist propaganda or the oppression of a dictatorship, were openly supportive of Mussolini. Those intellectuals did not understand this phenomenon from the very beginning of their American experience; they did not understand that for Italian Americans the exaltation of Italy in that period was revenge against the dominant Anglo-Saxon class that had humiliated them for decades. For the first time they felt they belonged to a *nation* that was asserting itself on the international

insert < a >

5 The reference is to the war of 1870 when the troops of the king of Italy attacked and took over Rome through a breach in the defensive walls at Porta Pia. This resulted in the annexation of Rome to the kingdom of Italy and the self-exile of the pope inside the Vatican compound.

6 *Renun Novatum*, 1891 [*About New Things*]. It is one of the most influential papal encyclicals of all times. Issued by Pope Leo XIII, it defined for the first time the Catholic social doctrine within the context of the *modernist* ideology, its institutions and structures: representative democracy, market capitalism, meritocracy and labor unions. The contrast between the Italy of Porta Pia and that of *Renun Novatum* could not be more striking.

7 Gaetano Salvemini (1873-1957). Political scientist, historian, writer and leading anti-Fascist intellectual. He taught history at Harvard from 1930 to 1948. The correspondence between Salvemini and Prezzolini reveals sharp disagreements and fiery arguments between the two.

• Don Luigi Sturzo (1871-1959). Catholic priest and founder in 1919 of the Partito Popolare, precursor of the Christian Democratic Party founded after WWII. He was exiled by Mussolini in 1924 and lived in London and New York. A collection of his essays contained in *Miscellanea Londinese*, a series of several volumes with his writings from 1925 to 1940 published after his death. These and other essays are published in the *Opera Omnia of Luigi Sturzo*, an on-going project lasting several decades by the Istituto Luigi Sturzo. (*Opera Omnia di Luigi Sturzo*. Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino Editore.)

insert < is >

scene. They were not disciples of Georges Sorel or Alfredo Oriani.<sup>8</sup> Even today they do not follow any political theory, which they would not understand anyway. But even when a low-level representative of Italy comes to the United States, they revere him and project onto him their yearning to be part of a great country and a great nation, respected and honored even by those who maintain toward its sons an attitude of condescendence and superiority.

In previous articles I failed to discuss the daily *L'Italia*, founded in 1886 in San Francisco and still alive and well. It represents well the Italian-language press on the West Coast of America. The editor in chief is Renato Marazzini; president of the publishing house is Frank de Bellis,<sup>9</sup> a true apostle of Italian culture and, in particular, music. I am looking at a special issue celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary. The periodical is written in good Italian with reasonable articles and good-quality print. It reflects, it must be said, the origins of the Italian immigration to California, composed mostly of people from Tuscany, Piedmont, and Liguria. From their ranks came the first big contribution to America, the banker Amadeo Giannini,<sup>10</sup> a Genoese

---

8 Georges Sorel (1847-1922). French philosopher. His theories on the power of myth and revolutionary unionism influenced both Marxism and Fascism.

• Alfredo Oriani (1852-1909). Writer. In the book *La rivola ideale* (1908) he advocated the creation of a strong state in charge of regulating social life. Mussolini drew from his ideas in shaping the ideology of the Fascist movement.

9 Renato Marazzini (1897-1984). Journalist.

• Frank de Bellis (1898-1968). Born in Italy and migrated with his parents to the United States, de Bellis returned to Italy at age 16 to serve as a volunteer in WWI. After the war, he returned to the United States and settled in San Francisco. He retired in 1941 to devote his whole attention to the study of Italian culture and his true callings: music and ancient-book collecting. In 1948 he launched a weekly radio program, *Records from Italy*, and, later, *Music of Italian Masters*. At the time of his death in 1968 over 100 radio stations nationwide carried the program. In 1963 he donated a collection of 200 incunabula to the Bridwell Library at Southern Methodist University, in University Park, Texas. The following year he donated his collection of 15,000 rare books and manuscripts and 22,000 recordings to San Francisco State College, now stored in the Frank V. de Bellis Collection in the J. Paul Leonard Library. <http://www.library.sfsu.edu/depts/dabellis.php>.

10 Amadeo Giannini (1870-1949). The son of Italian immigrants from Genoa, Giannini founded the Bank of Italy in San Francisco in 1904. After the earthquake of 1906, Giannini was the only banker willing to risk lending cash to individuals

who taught the art of fundraising to his competitors, both Anglo-Saxons and New York Jews.

There are other semi-dalles: for example, Boston's *La Notizia*,<sup>11</sup> which is still entirely in Italian. It was quite an impression to find out that the editor, an expert in economics, was also the publisher of *The Boston Free Press*,<sup>12</sup> a non-partisan paper which supports conservative causes (and that is getting more and more popular). Although the target audience is Americans of Italian origin, its content is decidedly national and even more interesting than what appears in *La Notizia*. In Boston there is also a periodical that I believe was the first to adopt English to speak to the new generations of Italians, *The Italian News*, founded in 1921, and "essential for every Italian family that reads." When I visited the newsroom, the interpreter was a skilled and polite Jewish gentleman. These newspapers have peculiar relationships with Italian periodicals. They claim to have correspondents in Italy but, frankly, I heard about any of them. For instance, I saw the name of a certain C., a lawyer, who was touted to be a national personality in Italy. In another newspaper I read the announcement of an exchange of editors between two periodicals, one in Michigan and the other in Foggia.<sup>13</sup> The first would cover Michigan affairs for the Foggia publication and the other the Foggia affairs for the Michigan paper. The world, apparently, is getting smaller and smaller if Foggia is interested in Michigan, and—even more surprising—if Michigan is interested in Foggia.

Some of these periodicals are printed with offset technology, the cottage-industry standard of publication. And in fact it is a family in Dearborn, Michigan, that publishes a monthly periodical of this kind: *Mondo libero*. Owner and editor-in-chief is Oberdan Rizzo, administrator is Anna Rizzo. It is a literary magazine that publishes poems both in Italian and in English (a typical bad habit of many Italian American periodicals). Strangely, it also contains copy in Spanish

and businesses. In 1928 Giannini acquired the Los Angeles-based Bank of America which he ran until he retired in 1945.

11 *La Notizia*, 1916-?

12 *The Boston Free Press*, 1960-?

13 Foggia. City in northern Apulia.

insert <never>

and it claims to be the “only Italian American periodical of this kind in America.” I believe it. Among the advertisement I noticed one for the magazine *Controvento* published in Alanno, in the province of Pescara. This is the kind of news that makes me feel the burden of my ignorance, caused ~~at~~ my notoriously long absence from Italy. The *Parola del popolo*<sup>14</sup> (published in Chicago) is a bi-monthly socialist periodical that embraces humanitarian ideals typical of the period of Camillo Prampolini and Filippo Turati.<sup>15</sup> My preference would be for more openly revolutionary ideals. Here I found an example of the cultural exchanges between America and southern Italy: a poetry contest “sponsored by the Columbian Academy of St. Louis, Missouri, and *Pungolo verde* [*The Green Prosl*] of Campobasso.” I am not saying there is anything wrong with it, but maybe the problem is exactly that there is nothing wrong and that this production resembles too closely that of the bourgeois *Farfalle*<sup>16</sup> [*Butterflies*].

I have good feelings for the New York weekly magazine *Adunata dei refrattari* [*Rally of the Reluctant*], an openly anarchist publication. Nothing to be afraid of, here. I read the announcements of their rallies and I discovered that they consist of open-air picnics or dinners in a *trattoria*. The travel directions to those gatherings clearly imply that today’s anarchists own a car (yours truly, a bourgeois, doesn’t have one) and they have disposable income that allows them to eat out just like

<sup>14</sup> *La parola del popolo* (1959-1963). Published by the *Centro storico nomini rappresentativi del socialismo*, Chicago, IL.

<sup>15</sup> Camillo Prampolini (1859-1930). Socialist politician of the reformist, anti-Bolshevik wing. In 1886 he founded the periodical *La Giustizia*, later suppressed by the Fascist regime in 1925. With Filippo Turati and Giacomo Matteotti he founded the *Partito Socialista Unificato* in 1922.

• Filippo Turati (1857-1932). Sociologist, poet and politician, was one of the founders of the *Partito Socialista Unificato* in 1922 and remained the true intellectual leader of the reformist movement that renounced revolution as a means of political struggle. After Mussolini took power in 1922 he fled to France where he remained in exile until his death in 1932.

<sup>16</sup> *La farfalla*. Firenze: Nerbini, 1921-1929. Periodical of provincial and popular poetry. In addition to *La farfalla* published in Florence, there were numerous weekly or monthly local editions in the major Italian cities, among which: *La farfalla italiana*; *La farfalla romana*; *La farfalla sarda*; *La farfalla bolognese*; *La farfalla genovese*; *La farfalla napoletana*; *La farfalla siciliana*; *La farfalla piemontese*; *La farfalla toscana*.

delete (to) insert < by >

I do. I have no idea how the anarchists would be able to get a car in an anarchist society, since factories tend to be rather tyrannical. But this is their problem. They also have drama clubs that produce dewy plays on the fate of the proletarians. Since I was a kid I have always loved picnics and hated melodramatic theater; however, I support the opposition to tyranny in any nation, Russia included. I have always respected and I have dear memories of Camillo Berneri,<sup>17</sup> whom I met in Paris and whose writings are still being published by *L'Adunata*. The ever-present losses on the balance sheet prove that the publishers are not making any money. It is written in solid though a little antiquated Italian, still better than *Il Progresso Italo-Americano*. If I were not afraid of offending them, I would say they remind me of my old professors.

In Boston there exists to this day a little magazine called *Controcorrente* [*Upstream*]. It survived the death of Salvemini, who, in the last years of his stay in America, enriched it with the fervor of his passion against injustice. It was the only publication Salvemini did not abandon. Here he had found a small group of narrow-minded, uncultured individuals always willing to tell him how right he was. They also allowed him to publish the fruit of his sourly spirit, progressively more and more embittered against the Italians who had refused to give him the same power they gave Mussolini.<sup>18</sup>

The *Tribuna italiana* of Phoenix, Arizona, is probably the latest addition to the roster of Italian periodicals. The *Italo-American News* of Orleans [sic] instead must be one of the oldest ones (it claims forty-five years of life.) Despite the fact that both are little more than leaflets, I always try to read them. The social announcements, the little news stories, the photos of the faces in those colonial banquets (unfortunately always too similar) tell a long story. If somebody wanted to write the history of Italian immigration to the United States, it

17 Camillo Berneri (1897-1937). Professor of philosophy, political theorist and anarchist activist.

18 Benito Mussolini (1883-1945). Journalist and politician, founder and leader of the *Fasci di Combattimento*, later renamed *Partito Nazionale Fascista*. He became prime minister in 1922 and in 1925 proceeded to dissolve the parliament, thus transforming the Italian political system from a democracy into a personal dictatorship. He ruled until 1943 when he was removed from office and arrested by the king.



would be impossible to find primary sources or original documents. The immigrants got rid of everything that reminded them of their past and the survivors don't even want to talk about it. But for anyone with a bit of imagination, so much can be read on those faces, in those gestures, in the way they dress up for social events. Something that has survived since the era of Enrico Caruso,<sup>19</sup> who represented the ideal of Italian in America, is the monthly *Follia*<sup>20</sup> [*Madness*]: it really looks like a barber-shop magazine from the era of the Italian king Umberto I.<sup>21</sup>

In Hartford, Connecticut, there is a group of publications that reflects the vitality of a flourishing population of Italian origin. The *Italian Review* is printed on glossy paper with so many illustrations that it looks like a fashion magazine. The editor-in-chief, Venerando Sequenzia<sup>22</sup> has chosen a range of Italian topics that goes from fashion to literature and from cuisine to theater. It contains short capsules, lots of addresses, a culinary dictionary, a list of new books and records and other curiosities. It is a mix of intriguing small items that must be very attractive to the readers. This reminds me of another journal of Italian studies that has been around for a long time, *Italica*, founded in 1924 by Professor Rudolph Altrocchi<sup>23</sup> and currently edited by Professor Joseph Fucilla of Evanston, Illinois, near Chicago. It is the official publication of the Association of Teachers of Italian.<sup>24</sup> The content is

19 Enrico Caruso (1873-1921). One of the greatest tenors of all times, Caruso became the most famous Italian in America. According to Wikipedia, his 1904 recording of the aria "Vesti la giubba," from Ruggero Leoncavallo's *I pagliacci*, was the first record in history to sell one million copies.

20 *La Follia di New York* (1893-present).

21 Umberto I (1844-1900). King of Italy from 1878. He was assassinated during a parade by a gunshot fired by the Italian American anarchist (and possibly police informer) Gaetano Bresci, of Paterson, NJ.

22 Venerando Sequenzia (1918-1986). Publisher of The Italian Review and, later, of *The Italian Bulletin*.

23 Rudolph Altrocchi (1882-1953). Professor and chair of the Italian department at the University of California-Berkeley from 1928 to 1947.

24 American Association Teachers of Italian. Founded in 1923. It is currently the largest association of primary, secondary and higher education teachers of Italian in the United States and Canada. Its mission is to "Preserve, Advance, and Promote Italian Language and Culture."

italics

italics

generally of the old stuffy kind, mostly historical and documentary. Recently it started publishing more modern critical contributions and functions as a forum for young teachers who want to show off their intellectual ability and get credit for their publications. In my opinion it should be required reading for teachers. The University of California Los Angeles, thanks to an initiative by Professor Charles Golino, publishes the new journal *Italian Quarterly*,<sup>25</sup> which devotes each issue to one specific theme. It shows greater critical liveliness and more openness on the new horizons of Italian literature and social life. Both journals are to be admired for their efforts in the midst of a very strong competition from academic journals devoted to foreign languages, and at the same time in the midst of the general indifference of the Italian American public for anything that goes beyond the immediate and local social life.

*New York, 8 dicembre 1961*

P.S. I could only mention and describe the periodicals that I have received over the years. There are many others, but I have never seen them and I could not find them at the library.

---

<sup>25</sup> Carlo Golino (1913-1991), Professor of Italian at UCLA Riverside campus. He became vice chancellor in 1965. In 1973 he was appointed Chancellor of the University of Massachusetts, Boston.

• *Italian Quarterly* (1957-present) is a literary journal presently published by Rutgers University of New Jersey.

ALWAYS THE SAME OLD FACES  
AT MR. POPE'S SOLEMN BANQUETS

I have already mentioned Fortune Pope, the so-called spokesperson of the New York Italian American community and publisher of the least decrepit among the Italian-language newspapers in the United States. By virtue of this role he has had audiences with the president of Italy and the real pope. Now he has been indicted for fraud against his company's stockholders and the city of New York. Let me begin by saying that there are several people who rejoice at these developments. First of all, the fall of a person in such a visible position (made even more visible by his lust for self promotion) makes the envious happy; the same people who, had they been in his place, would have behaved even worse than he. Then there are those who have been disgusted or hurt by his arrogance. Other happy people, probably, are those who fought battles with him and lost, suffering damages to their interests and ambitions. But it is not his personal case that interests us; rather we are more concerned with the consequences that this disgraceful story might have for the community and for the reputation of Italian Americans.

The aspect that impressed me the most in this unexpected and unwelcome story is the silence of the editor-in-chief and the readers of his newspaper. The news of the accusations has occupied several columns of the *New York Times*, yet nobody in the pages of his own newspaper has risen to defend the accused, ~~despite the fact that here~~ he could have all the space he would ever need to make a counter argument. That hasn't happened. The only thing the readers saw [in the *Progress*] was a tiny, little news item buried inside the paper, in stark contrasts to the occasions when Mr. Pope is celebrated with honors and praise. In those circumstances the news always appears on the front page accompanied by mandatory photos. It doesn't seem that the readers have expressed any indignation either. Or, at least, I have not seen any letters indicating that the readers were emotionally involved in the story and outraged at this so-called injustice. As far as I am concerned, I have no desire to see the accusation proven. I have no warm feelings for Fortune Pope but I will content myself

delete < ; > insert < ; >

with the opinion, which I am sure he will be forced to share, that he is nowhere as good as his father, Generoso Pope, if not for anything else, at least for the fact that the son was born with a golden [sic] spoon in his mouth while his father forged the golden spoon with his own hands with tenacity and ingenuousness, in a world much less positively disposed toward Italians than what the son later found. I would be very happy if Fortune Pope could show that he is innocent of all charges with clear and direct evidence rather than by means of crafty lawyers (he can afford to hire the best.) I would be happy, not for him, for I don't care about him, but for the Italian Americans who grew up here and for the Italians who arrived recently from Italy and haven't yet been beaten down. And finally, I would be happy for all of us, because we always end up having to bear the burden of a public opinion that judges us on the basis on the most sensational scandals and crimes connected to Italian names. For, despite the fact that his father changed his name from Papa to Pope, everybody knows he is Italian.

I am not implying here that all Italian Americans and the recently arrived immigrants from Italy actually want or accept to be represented by Pope and his circle of cronies. To the contrary, we must remark that the group of people that American and Italian official authorities identify as the representatives of Italians and Italian Americans in New York is extremely small. For several years now, if one read the *Progresso* or attended the banquet sponsored by the newspaper, one would find more or less the same old faces gathered around lavishly catered banquet tables, with the same names in the list of participants and honorees. For ten years while I was director of *Casa Italiana* [at Columbia University] I collected the obituaries of important people with Italian last names that appeared in the *New York Times*. These were Italian Americans who had distinguished themselves but whose names, in most cases, never appeared in the reunions of the people

insert < have >

<sup>1</sup> *Casa Italiana*. Established in 1927, it housed the Italian department of Columbia University and functioned as an institute of advanced studies on Italian culture in America. Its first director was Giuseppe Prezolini, appointed in 1930. Due to its connection with the Fascist regime, it was regarded as a center of enemy political propaganda and was closed down in 1940. It reopened in 1991 thanks to a major donation by the Italian government. It currently houses the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies in America.

who had appointed themselves representative of millions of Italian descendants. None of the Italian consuls had bothered reaching out to these eminent Italians, none of whom had sought to be associated with the *Progresso* or with Pope. They did not contribute to fund-raising events and did not show up at colonial banquets and parades. Everyone knows that the claim by the Pope-led group that they are the de-facto representatives of Italian Americans is a complete fantasy. One could see it very clearly on the occasion of the 1950 mayoral election in New York. The candidate endorsed<sup>3</sup> by the *Progresso* was not elected (rumors circulated that he was also supported by Frank Costello<sup>3</sup>). The winner, Vincent Impellitteri, received the silent treatment from the *Progresso* until he was elected. The same thing happened to the other candidate, the Republican Edward Corsi.<sup>4</sup> In that moment it became clear that the so-called Italian vote does not exist. The first evidence had already surfaced years earlier with the candidature of La Guardia, whom the *Progresso* did not support. He, nevertheless, was elected, not necessarily only with the votes of all Italian Americans, but certainly with the votes of many of them. Yet, [Italian] authorities, as their lackeys call them, never realized this simple fact: the entire prestige of the *Progresso* and Pope's rests only on the attention, the honors and the favors that those authorities themselves bestow on him.

Who is responsible for the myth that Pope and the *Progresso* represent and control the Italian American public opinion in New York and can maneuver its votes? The culprits are primarily the various Italian governments, from the first to the last: the Liberal, the Fascist

<sup>2</sup> The Democratic Party candidate, chosen by the Tammany Hall political machine, was Ferdinand Pecora (1882-1971). Most likely he was the candidate endorsed by the *Progresso*.

<sup>3</sup> Frank Costello (1891-1973). One of the most notorious Mafia bosses, co-founder of the commission—the self-styled supreme council of Cosa Nostra—he was a close ally of Lucky Luciano and eventually became boss of the Luciano family. He was said to have had very extensive contacts inside the Tammany Hall organization that controlled the Democratic Party's electoral machine in New York City.

<sup>4</sup> Edward Corsi (1896-1965). Republican candidate in the 1950 New York City mayoral election.

Handwritten notes: A line from the word "insert" in footnote 3 points to the word "insert" in the notes. Next to it is a handwritten "H" with three horizontal lines underneath it. To the right of the "H" is the handwritten text "delete (-)" and "insert (<.)".

and the Christian Democrat.<sup>5</sup> I should also add to this list the Catholic Church hierarchy, which is much more influential over the souls of Italian believers than any of the consular authorities. Among those who understood the danger of this arrangement was a sharp but unassuming writer (and maybe too shy), Beniamino de Ritis.<sup>6</sup> When the Italian ambassador of that time asked him for his assessment, he expressed—not very forcefully—the opinion that Pope should not be allowed to buy the *Corriere d'America*, founded and directed for a while by Luigi Barzini Sr.,<sup>7</sup> the only Italian newspaper that was competing with the *Progresso*. His recommendation was ignored. Another opportunity to get rid of Pope's influence arrived on the occasion of President Giovanni Gronchi's<sup>8</sup> official state visit to the United States. It would have been the most opportune moment to change the system. The president did not come here to visit only Italian Americans but all Americans. On that occasion, the authoritative voice of Luigi Barzini Jr.,<sup>9</sup> son of the above mentioned Sr., insisted that the traditional banquet offered to honor Italian officials visiting New York should mirror America, not Little Italy, and should not feature Pope as the host. This was not meant as a slight, but Little Italy certainly does not represent America as a whole.

It would take a long time to tell the story of what happened and why the event ended up being the usual colonial banquet with the

delete <, > insert <.>

5 Liberal: from 1892 to 1921. Fascist: from 1922 to 1943. Christian Democrat: from 1946 to 1992.

6 Beniamino de Ritis (1889-1956). Journalist and writer, he was the *Corriere della Sera* correspondent from the United States during Luigi Barzini Sr.'s tenure. He also collaborated with *The Evening Post* and other American publications.

7 Luigi Barzini, Sr. (1874-1947). Legendary journalist and war correspondent, he received the highest honors from both the United Kingdom and France (recipient, respectively of the Order of the British Empire and the *Legion d'honneur*). He was correspondent of the *Corriere della Sera* from the United States from 1921 to 1931. In 1923 he bought the *Corriere d'America* which he directed until his return to Italy.

8 Giovanni Gronchi (1887-1978). Third president of Italy from 1955 to 1962 and first Italian head of state to visit the United States in 1956.

9 Luigi Barzini Jr. (1908-1984). Journalist, writer and politician. His most famous book, *The Italians* was published expressly for the American market (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1964).

same faces and the same rhetoric. Other voices have already made the same point, sincere voices, maybe too sincere to carry any weight. And so, many Americans of Italian origin and many Americans who had honored Italy with their deeds were excluded from the events in honor of the president. Everybody is caught in a vicious circle. Favours from Italian governments created a power structure inside the Italian American community that later Italian governments were forced to tolerate, pacify and buy back, despite the fact that none of its members deserved preeminent positions. Who initiated this state of affairs and when? Was it the local Italian officials or was it the ministry of foreign affairs in Rome? It's hard to tell, but over the years I heard of quite a few episodes that are just shocking. Unfortunately, I don't have sufficient evidence to prove they are true and therefore I won't report them. However, I feel the moral duty to put forth my observation. The current pathetic situation derives in great part from the tendency of the [Italian] bureaucratic apparatus to seek the easy way out (the banquet with 1800 attendees, paid by banks or labor unions) with frivolous events (dinners, parades, receptions). In the meantime, Italian language programs in American middle schools are the last ones, with a 0.3% attendance among students taking foreign language courses. The leader is Spanish with 18% but even Russian, the latest entry, is higher, with 0.5%. Our bureaucracies do not like long-term plans and they turn to the local organizations only when these agree and go along. The Italian-language publications are read only by the generation of fifty-five years old or older who were never able to learn English and, as a consequence, young Italian Americans do not feel represented by these antiquated relics of the past. What is needed is a long-term perspective and concrete targets. For instance, it is probable that an English-language magazine targeting the new generations of Italian Americans would be successful. We should offer to them the same thing that independent American magazines provide, instead of sycophantic rags that exalt the *prominenti*. The new generations of Italian Americans should no longer be fed stale bread.

So many things should be done.... The list could go on for ever. Let's hope that where experience failed, where advice was rejected or ignored, at least disaster will serve the cause.

insert (have)

delete (&gt;&gt;&gt;)

*New York, October 16, 1960*

P.S. The decline of Italian language in elementary, middle and secondary schools, which I had predicted, was confirmed by Professor Henry [sic] Golden in the December 1962 issue of the journal *Italica*.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Herbert Golden, "The Teaching of Italian: The 1962 Balance Sheet," *Italian*, Vol. 39, No. 4, Dec. 1962 (276-288).



## POPE KEEPS THE MARSHAL'S BATON

The Pope affair is unpleasant for everybody. It is unpleasant for American citizens of Italian origin who don't want to be represented by an individual who was found guilty of fraud against his business partners and was labeled an imbecile by the judge. It is unpleasant for the Italian government, which, for the sake of decency, has been forced to stay away from Italian American official events where he plays host. It is unpleasant for those American citizens who have a sense of what is proper and see this individual welcomed and honored by the city's political and Catholic authorities. I hope it is also unpleasant for Pope himself who has been chastised three times by the *New York Times* for security fraud and for cheating on a city contract for the supply of road salt.

And, finally, it is unpleasant for those who have to report these events and provide an interpretation that, *par force*, must cast reproach on everyone involved. It would be much more pleasant to write in full conscience that American democracy selects its representatives among the most virtuous individuals; that the editor-in-chief of the most important (or, at least, the least insignificant) newspaper in Italian language in the United States is a shiny example of culture, refinement and financial probity; that none of the highest apostles of the Catholic Church kneeled in front of local politicians; and that the so-called Italian community has such a keen sense of its own individuality among all the other foreign-origin communities of Greater America that it can deny support to people who misbehave. It would be ideal, but it is not the reality.

The scandal erupted on October 9, 1961, when the *New York Times* reported that neither the consul general of Italy in New York nor any other official representative of the Italian government would participate in the October 12 Columbus Day parade and the following official banquet. The official host of both events was Fortune Pope, publisher and editor-in-chief of the *Progresso Italo-Americano*. The reason for breaking with a very long tradition was the sentence Pope and his brother were still serving while on probation. Two days after that report, on October 11, an editorial (an article that expresses the

insert  
(committing)

opinion of a newspaper's editorial board) appeared praising Italian authorities (ambassador and consul) for showing a better sense of integrity and dignity than New York's politicians such as Governor Nelson Rockefeller<sup>1</sup> and New York Mayor Wagner, who were explicitly mentioned. The article also mentioned the verdict against the Pope brothers and remarked the inappropriateness for elected officials to associate with parolees.

The origin of Fortune Pope's power lies primarily in a series of errors committed over the years by the various Italian governments in the Liberal, Fascist and Christian Democrat eras. Italian authorities have convinced Italian Americans that the Popes, first the father and now the son, represent Italy abroad and that being mentioned in the *Progresso* is the best route to obtain favors and honors from the Italian government. It so happens, in fact, that Italian government representatives after arriving in New York look for quick personal triumphs. When they realize how hard it is to penetrate the higher American circles, they content themselves with lesser honors, usually brokered by the *Progresso Italo-Americano*. In the Italian community vanity abounds and in recent times there is also an abundance of rich people. Moreover, in America it is common for the rich to spend money to look good in public. From this mentality came the banquets at the Waldorf Astoria that would pump up Italian ministers and undersecretaries in visit to New York, ignorant of the difference between decent people (there are many among the Italian Americans) and enriched lice. Pope sells back to the Italian governments the power that derives to him from being accepted as the go-between with Italian Americans and government officials. From a pure perspective of realpolitik, it has been a terrible investment for the Italian government but a great one for Pope. This series of errors could have ended when President Giovanni Gronchi was on a state visit to America in 1956, the first Italian head of state ever to do so. His should have been a visit to the American people. Instead, it turned out to be a visit to the Italian American friends of Pope.

This year the dinner offered by the Columbus Committee, and the

---

<sup>1</sup> Nelson Rockefeller (1908-1978), Businessman and politician. He was governor of New York from 1959 to 1973. He also served as vice president of the United States under President Gerald Ford from 1974 to 1977.

Columbus Day parade the following day, were a great success for Pope. Even though we don't believe the numbers printed in his newspaper (one hundred thousand marchers and one million spectators) it is a fact that the public's participation was enormous—and that the *New York Times* didn't hold anyone back. Is it indeed possible that the *Times* may not be the most popular newspaper among Italian Americans?

In the major American cities the mixing of organized crime and politics is a tradition that started well before Italians arrived here. Italian gangsters eventually absorbed and perfected the lesson learned from the local criminal elements. There is, though, a peculiar aspect that is unique to the Italian American community, namely the tolerance for organized crime. Italians stood by when it was being imported, while it was growing and until it adapted itself to America and began to prosper. None of the Italian-community leaders ever spoke against it and there is no record of a single judge, politician, journalist or even a priest of Italian origin who mounted a campaign against Italian criminality. Anglo-Saxon journalists, pastors, politicians and cartoonists in New York, to the contrary, did wage anti-crime wars against their own kind before Italians arrived.

The marshal leading the October 12 Columbus Day parade was Fortune Pope. In front of Saint Patrick's Cathedral, on Fifth Avenue, he bowed in front of Cardinal Francis Spellman<sup>2</sup> who was waiting at the top of the steps that lead up to the portal. The cardinal responded with a gesture and a smile. If we consider the fact that—as a high Catholic authority explained to me—Fortune Pope is officially excommunicated because he is divorced, one may ask what the meaning of that salute is. The English report says: "He waved," which means the cardinal moved his hand in the air to salute him. Was it a blessing? A scolding? "Ah, bad boy. That was a big one that you did. But this time I'm going to let you get away with it." Or was it electoral complicity? Who knows? Maybe a clarification from such a high authority would be welcomed by the many who, in Italy, suffer because they don't have the Catholic Church's permission to divorce. Or, is divorce now a preferential title, necessary to merit the friendship and protection of a cardinal? A little

<sup>2</sup> Francis Spellman (1889- 1967). Archbishop of New York from 1939 to 1967. He became cardinal in 1946.

later, further down the avenue, Fortune Pope left the parade and climbed onto the viewing platform where the authorities, including Governor Rockefeller, were standing. Here he was warmly welcomed. When Rockefeller left the platform, Pope managed to get his picture taken with Mayor Wagner.

To this day, October 16, nobody has complained.

Obviously, this does not mean that all Italian Americans or all New Yorkers approve of Pope. It simply means that the great majority is not concerned with it, probably doesn't know and certainly doesn't care. I bet that maybe only one out of every ten thousand people understood the objections raised by the *New York Times*. In America parades are public events for the happy sheep that participate: they are eager to march because this is part of society's norms and also a source of fun in these collectivistic times. In the last few years the Columbus Day parade has become an event for all newcomers from every corner of the world who have contributed to America's fortune. The participants are high school students, city employees, union members and political-club members. Some show up only because they can't avoid it. This year there were also political adversaries of the mayor, such as Lawrence Gerosa.

The official banquet was also a great personal triumph for Fortune Pope. When the American anthem played everybody stood up. When the Italian anthem<sup>3</sup> played, everybody continued their conversations sitting down, Pope included. Was this pre-ordained? Was it just a mistake? Was it maybe a warning and a reminder to the Italian government as to who is really in charge? Many expected that after his guilty sentence Pope would retire from public life, at least for some time. After all, he is immensely rich and has no public office. Many recommended a low profile as the best strategy for a time, after which he could reemerge in the circuit of banquets, photo-ops and ceremonies that so please him. That's not the way it went, and to tell

<sup>3</sup> In the original: *Inno di Mameli*. Italians refer to their national anthem with the name of the poet who authored the lyrics, Goffredo Mameli (1827-1849). The music was composed by Michele Novaro (1818-1885). Originally titled *Il canto degli Italiani*, it became the official anthem of the newly-born Italian Republic in 1946, following the referendum that suppressed the monarchy. It is also frequently referred to as *Fratelli d'Italia* (Brothers of Italy)—the first words of the initial verse.

replace with <it>  
italians

the truth, he was right. Pope knows the life of the largest American city better than I do. He knew he had the governor, the mayor and the hand-waving cardinal in his vest's pocket. He probably thinks he also has in his pocket the various Italian ministers of foreign affairs, and he probably bets they will soon fire the consul who defied the laws of American cities. The rumors from his circle are that the consul's absence was just a personal pique. I can testify, however, that it is not true and that the ambassador agrees fully with the consul. In Pope's newspaper there was no mention of the New York Times reports. Its readers only read, in a few lines, that he was found guilty on a technicality. What they know is that at the banquet he received a warm applause; that he got to sit next to the governor; that the mayor shook his hand and that the cardinal waved at him. As I said before, Fortune Pope is right and we are wrong because we are ignorant of the unwritten laws that rule American democracy in the biggest cities.

Are these the same laws that also govern older and more venerable institutions? Who knows?

\*\*\*

A spokesperson for Cardinal Spellman informed the press that the gesture toward Mr. Pope was not "a blessing." What was it then? And what did his smile mean?

*New York, October 22, 1961*

## ADDENDUM TO THE POPE SCANDAL

The Editors-in-Chief of *Il Resto del Carlino* and *La Nazione*<sup>1</sup> on October 27, 1961, received the following telegram from New York:

The article by Giuseppe Prezzolini published in your respected newspaper on October 22, contains several mistakes. One of them is particularly egregious in that it insults and offends the dignity of more than 2,200 dinner guests, including Cardinal Spellman, Governor Rockefeller, Mayor Wagner and hundreds of other respected members of our community, and it accuses them of being disrespectful toward Italy. Mr. Prezzolini states that while the Italian anthem was being played, everyone, including Mr. Pope, continued in their conversation and nobody stood up. This statement is totally false in that the Italian anthem was never played, this time or any other time. The Columbian dinner is an American celebration. The Columbian Committee respectfully requests the retraction of this statement.

Signed: Fortune Pope, President Columbus Citizens Committee.

The telegram by Fortune Pope, editor of the *Progresso Italo-Americano* deserves the following condemnation: it is reckless. And here are the reasons. In my article of October 22 I listed a series of events that prompted the consul general of Italy in New York to refuse to participate in the ceremonies of the Italian American community chaired by Pope. Pope had been found guilty of defrauding his business partners but has been free on parole for a year after returning the money. He and his brother had been labeled "stupid" by the judge.

- 1) In addition, he had sold road salt to the city defrauding it for about half a million dollars, a sum he was forced to return.
- 2) None of these facts were ever reported by the *Progresso Italo-Americano*, whose readers were told only that that its editor was found guilty based on a "technicality."
- 3) Despite the requests of civil and religious authorities that he step down, Pope insisted on being again the marshal of the

All this should be in regular-size font

<sup>1</sup> *Il Resto del Carlino* is Bologna's largest-circulation newspaper, founded in 1885.

• *La Nazione* is Florence's largest-circulation newspaper, founded in 1859.

Columbus Day parade and wanted to chair the gala dinner for the same occasion.

- 4) Despite all this, the parade attracted a large public, on orders from the political bosses, union bosses and the heads of the city's public departments.
- 5) Despite all this, the parade was attended by the governor of the state, the mayor and Cardinal Spellman, who, from the steps of the cathedral, waved at Pope with a friendly gesture and a smile. The first two personages spent time in friendly chats with him.
- 6) The entire situation was rather extraordinary and I tried to explain that the reason lies in the corrupt atmosphere of American cities. I also emphasized the moral indifference of many Italian Americans.
- 7) In the course of my analysis I mentioned that when the Italian anthem was played at the Columbus dinner, the participants did not stand up. I asked a number of questions as to the possible interpretations of this behavior, including the possibility that the report was inaccurate.

popularize four

I maintain that Mr. Pope's telegram is reckless because he only refutes one point. It is therefore obvious he cannot refute any other facts reported in my article (similarly, he has not refuted any other article I have written about him and his newspaper.) He is also reckless because he does not realize he is implicitly admitting I told the truth about everything else. Even if it turned out, as he claims, that my report on the events at the dinner were false, the fact remains that everything else must be true. The story about the anthem, by the way, was not the premise, nor the central point, nor the conclusion of my article: it was a marginal episode that, whether true or false, does not detract from the value of the larger point I was trying to make. Mr. Pope's protestations remind me the logic of the thief who defended himself in court by saying: "I am accused of stealing a watch at 12:57. In reality I stole it at 12:30, therefore the accusation is false and I must be acquitted."

But, is this circumstance, this detail, this fine point truly false, as Mr. Pope maintains? Let's see. Let me begin with the fact that, unlike

several other journalists. I was not invited to the gala and everybody can easily guess why (and it is not an issue). I wasn't there in person, therefore I do not know directly if the Italian national anthem did play, nor whether the guests heard it or not. A journalist is a bit like a historian of the present and historians would never be able to write anything if they could only write about things they witnessed in person. Even newspapers would be half of what they are if journalists could only report what they saw with their own eyes. Thus, since I could not attend the Columbian dinner, I asked Gianfranco Piazzesi, a colleague from my same newspaper, if he knew anything about it. He had not attended the dinner either, however, he had heard that the Italian national anthem had been played and that the guests had not stood up. He gave me the name of the person who had passed the information to him and I talked to this person on the telephone. The person in question is extremely authoritative, with a very important position and is very well equipped to report about this kind of affairs. In no uncertain terms his answer was: he attended the dinner; the anthem was played and some Italians stood up while everybody else remained seated. He also observed that, in that precise moment, at the honor table Pope kept at his conversation without standing up. This detail was not particularly important but it added a bit of color and I used it as a brush stroke to make the painting more vivid. As to the reason for Pope's behavior, whether it was planned that way or if it was an oversight, I mentioned the two possibilities in the form of question since I had no direct knowledge of the real answer. The only thing that matters to me now is whether my report was correct. In retrospect I don't think I would change a thing.

When I found out about Pope's complaint, I asked the same person if he could reconfirm what he had told me. He did; and he also talked to Pope's personal secretary telling him that he and other people had heard the Italian anthem; that they had stood up and noticed that everybody else had remained seated. Pope's secretary responded with a statement by the keyboard player who declared he had not played the Italian anthem. Contrary to this version, I found two more people who confirmed that the anthem had played: they know what it sounds like and it is impossible they could be mistaken.

*a delete and replace with < brushstroke >*



Confronted with these conflicting statements, one could think that the people who confirmed that the anthem had played are victims of a case of collective hallucinations. By the same token, one could also believe that the keyboard player who claims he never played it is the victim of a case of selective amnesia. Either hypothesis is believable. To me it matters that everything I wrote on October 22 about Mr. Pope has been confirmed and accepted without refutation by Pope himself. As to the little story about the anthem, my conscience is clear: I did everything within reason in order to ascertain the truth within the constraints of my sources. For this reason I am addressing my response not to Mr. Pope but to the public that has the right to know if what I wrote is true or false.

*New York, November 7, 1961.*

## GREAT ITALIANS AND HUMBLE IMMIGRANTS

From time to time I stumble upon a list of associations started by Italian immigrants in this country. As I read them, I find them moving and at the same time I smile at their innocent naïveté.

It's a repeat of the same impression I felt when I first arrived here, when, during the colonial banquets, someone would recite a list of names of Great Old Italians mixed together in a random fantasia as if they had been pulled from a hat by the hand of a child, like bingo numbers; and mixed together with no apparent logic. My impression was that those names were like a shield and a consolation; the same way for a thousand years the name of Rome (the imperial Rome of Caesar and Scipio) was a shield and a consolation for Italians after so many lost wars and so many tragedies of foreign invasions and subjugation. As happens to impoverished aristocratic families that still keep alive the memories of powerful and rich ancestors when money gets tight and the daughter must marry a vulgar *nouveau riche*, the names of forefathers serve a special purpose. However, after attending many colonial banquets I realized that the immigrant clubs were not named only after Dante Alighieri, Cristoforo Colombo, Leonardo da Vinci, Giuseppe Verdi and Arturo Toscanini? (knecding in the same

<sup>1</sup> Gaius Julius Caesar (100-44 BCE). Known simply as Caesar, he is Ancient Rome's best known military and political leader. He was also a historian of his own military victories. He was assassinated before he could name himself supreme dictator of the empire.

• Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus (236-184 BCE). Roman general regarded as one of the greatest strategists of ancient times. He defeated Hannibal in the final battle of Zama, in Tunisia in 202 BCE.

2 Cristoforo Colombo (1451-1506). Probably of Genoese origin, he is known in Spanish as Cristobal Colon and in English as Christopher Columbus. He was a navigator, explorer and colonizer. His first successful voyage to the American continent in 1492 opened the way for the European colonization of what became known as "The New World."

• Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901). One of the greatest music composers of all times, he is best known for his lyrical operas. Among them are masterpieces such as *Aida*, *Il trovatore*, *La traviata*, *Otello*, *Falstaff* and *Rigoletto*.

• Arturo Toscanini (1867-1957). One of the highest acclaimed orchestra conductors of all times. In 1949 he was offered the ultimate honor by the Italian republic: the appointment to the senate as Senatore a vita (Lifetime Senator). He

move the number inside the parentheses immediately after Scipio's

italians

< Republics >

delete ( ) insert [ ]

batch creators and performers). Many of these associations' names are also defensive, but in a different sense. They document the culture and ideals of the immigrants of the old days, and as such, they are a text worthy of study.

I wrote to the Supreme Recording Secretary (equivalent to chief archivist) of the largest national organization, the Sons of Italy (in English: Order of the Sons of Italy. This name gives a better sense of the concept of brotherhood than the Italian word *associazione*). Mr. Joseph Errigo, a lawyer from Wilmington, Delaware, was very courteous and helpful. In a few days my office desk was buried under lists of names of lodges. (One should not worry that those lodges may be similar to what in Italy are the Masonic lodges.)<sup>3</sup> In addition to those lists, I made sure I also researched the minutes of meetings of various associations in the Tri-state Area (New York, New Jersey and Connecticut) published over the course of an entire year in one of the Italian-language newspapers. This is not a comprehensive inventory covering the whole country, obviously. I have no idea what associations exist in the Midwest, in Oregon, in the Northwest, in California or in the Southwest. Nor do I know their names. However, I think this is a fairly representative sample. One could presume that, since Italian immigrants came from the same regions of Italy and encountered similar situations, they must have manifested resistance to the new environment more or less in the same way.

The overall impression one derives from this picture is that all the organizations of Italians in the United States were conceived with the purpose of preservation.

An orange wedge taken from the fruit and left in the open almost instantly develops a rind to preserve the internal moisture. Similarly, the wedges of Italian immigration's waves, after they had been separated from the mother country—about which they knew nothing or close

---

declined. He was the first of only two Italians to do so (the other was journalist Indro Montanelli.)

3 In Italian the term *loggia*—with the meaning of club or association chapter—indicates almost exclusively a chapter of the Free Masons, an association and lobbying power that for centuries has been condemned by the Catholic Church and secular governments. In the last half a century some *logge* have been at the center of sordid political and financial scandals.

to nothing—formed a defensive shield. The associations were all created for preservation, each one of them in a distinct form, for each one had something different to preserve in its own environment. Some associations were named after the location in which they were founded. Here, nostalgia for Italy was kept at bay. Springfield, Roslindale, Medford, Roxbury... Was it indifference or fear that made them ignore Italy? Was the need not to appear foreigner so strong in those immigrants? In the associations that chose an Italian name the preservation motive is quite apparent. Naturally, many were named after Columbus. It's understandable. When Americans badmouth Italy, Italians respond: "Without Christopher Columbus you wouldn't even exist..." After Columbus, Dante Alighieri is rather popular, although, for sure most of the members know the name and nothing else. And then, Francesco Petrarca, Torquato Tasso and, curiously, even Beatrice Portinari, maybe for a women's lodge that wanted to be connected with the *Divino Poeta*. I did not find Laura,<sup>4</sup> and I am quite happy about that.

The *Risorgimento* sector is rather well represented with *Risorgimento Italiano* (a term that gives it an 1880 flavor, or maybe a D'Annunzio<sup>5</sup> flavor.) I found a club dedicated to the Four Heroes<sup>6</sup> (of course we know who they are, but if I asked the members, wouldn't it be a bit mischievous?) Then I found the Bandiera brothers, many Garibaldi, a few Mazzini (and this proportion is natural for Italians). Among the other names there is Anita Garibaldi (it is easy to understand Italians' attraction for the personage of a woman who dies for her man); and

<sup>4</sup> Torquato Tasso (1544-1595). Author of *Gerusalemme liberata* (1581) [*Jerusalem Delivered*], the last of the great epic poems of Italian literature.

• Beatrice Portinari (1266-1290). She was Dante's muse and the famous Beatrice of the *Divine Comedy* who guides the writer through Purgatory and Paradise.

• In Italy Dante is known as *il Divino Poeta* or *il Sommo Poeta*.

• Laura was Petrarch's muse, the woman for whom he wrote his love poems.

<sup>5</sup> Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863-1938). Famous poet, writer and rebel rouser. He dominated the Italian literary scene and the gossip columns for half a century. His style was usually overabundant, particularly in his narrative works; and attracted a huge following of admirers as well as very large number of detractors. Prezzolini among them.

<sup>6</sup> King Vittorio Emanuele II; Prime Minister Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour; General Giuseppe Garibaldi; Giuseppe Mazzini.

even Adelaide Cairoli (and this is very, very anti-conformist); but also Massimo D'Azeglio? (I really cannot understand how his name ended up here. Maybe it was some Piedmontese immigrant who chose it. It sorts of bothers me that a hypocrite like him should be honored and remembered here.) [In the footnote: "This comment caused quite a surprise in some readers, even educated ones, who had never considered the contradictions between D'Azeglio's moralistic principles about marriage in his book *I miei ricordi*<sup>8</sup> and his libertine conduct in two marriages."]

In addition to the early *Risorgimento* period, the final phase of the movement is also remembered with several lodges founded after 1918 and named after Guglielmo Oberdan, Nazario Sauro and Cesare Battisti.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Artilio Bandiera (1810-1844) and Emilio Bandiera (1819-1844). Born in Venice, the two brothers were officers in the Austrian navy when their city and the Veneto region were part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. They became involved in the independence movement. Betrayed by informers, they were captured and executed by a firing squad.

• Giuseppe Mazzini (1805-1872). Philosopher and political thinker, he was one of the most authoritative proponents of the unification of Italy as a republic, against the existing monarchy. He organized plots and rebellions with very little success. He died in exile in London.

• Anita ~~Ribeiro~~ Garibaldi (1821-1849). Brazilian, wife of Giuseppe Garibaldi. They married in Paraguay while Garibaldi was in exile from Italy. She died of malaria while on the run with her husband in Italy.

• Adelaide Cairoli (1806-1871). Four of her children died in combat in the wars that led to unification of Italy. Ernesto, 1859; Luigi, 1860; Enrico, 1867; Giovanni, 1869

• Massimo D'Azeglio (1798-1866). Politician, patriot, writer. He theorized the unification of Italy as a federation of states rather than as a national state united under the Savoy dynasty.

<sup>8</sup> *I miei ricordi*. Firenze, Andrea Croci Editore, 1881.

<sup>9</sup> Guglielmo Oberdan (1858-1882). Deserter from the Austro-Hungarian army, he joined an irredentist group advocating the liberation of Italian regions under Austrian control. He plotted to assassinate Emperor Franz Joseph during a visit to Trieste. The attempt failed and he was arrested and executed.

• Nazario Sauro (1880-1916). Italian born in Austria-controlled territory, he was a sailor in the Austro-Hungarian imperial navy. He defected to Italy at the beginning of WWI. He was captured and hanged for treason.

• Cesare Battisti (1875-1916). Born in Trento, in the Austro-Hungarian empire, he was elected to the local regional parliament. He espoused the cause of independence

e replace with (Ribeiro)

One of these associations is named after Francesco De Sanctis.<sup>10</sup> I happen to know some of the members of this club: they are very good people. They chose that name because the famous literary critic was the most illustrious son of the town where they also were born. They chose him because he was a *paesano*, but they could not care less about helping a student of mine who was working on a dissertation on his work. Wreaths, gala, dinners and speeches? Yes. Books and dissertations? Never.

Just imagine now what these names mean in America. What does an American think when he hears those names? To him they are sounds and nothing else. Yet, to the immigrants they have a meaning, though not the same meaning they have in Italy. They are myths, like the names of saints, symbols of a vague greatness needed to compete with the greatness of America.

*New York, May 4, 1961*

---

from Austria and joined the Italian army at the beginning of WWI. After being captured, he was charged with high treason and executed by hanging in the Castello del Buon Consiglio in Trent. It is said that most of the people in the area named *Battisti*, ashamed of the name, switched to the German equivalent *Reiner*.

10 Francesco De Sanctis (1817-1883). To this day, he is still considered the most influential critic of Italian literature. He single-handedly shaped the curriculum and the ideological scaffolding for the teaching of Italian literature in all Italian schools. His method and critical/ideological approach dominated throughout the twentieth century, and to this day, more or less all Italian literature texts are still oriented in the same direction. His method, called *storicism*, consisted in a critical evaluation of authors and works of literature based primarily on the agenda of Italian unification. Texts and authors that served the goal of a historical trajectory toward unification were considered more relevant than those that did not directly approach related themes.