

this war, Bosnian Serbs possessed nothing but their own selves, their families, kin, friends, and their *history*, always an awful shape upon God's Earth, a tough, thrashing entity stretched through the Time of the Short Duration, recalling Troy, Athens, Singidunum (Celtic Belgrade), a Rome whose Coliseum remained a stony shell, only dimly reminiscent of its true shape and glory, like a rotten rib cage of a once mighty brave.

Wearing homespun and camouflage, Slavko Markovitch, Markan, smiled at us and disappeared into the forest, like a true Lusatian. *Lug*, the forest, took him in, his brown beard and mustache mingling with its moss and pine needles, while the .50 caliber on the hill opened up, like a rattling hailstorm upon a tin shack.

Behind our backs, Tomcat Hill shook and the Muslims lost: it took the Spaniards 700 years to drive them out, and thus reach *their* history, and greatness—we still had, if need be, a hundred years to go, before succumbing to AIDS, to forced and fake compassion, to universal and phony equality, the murder of justice in favor of legality, the substitution of contract for oath or vow, to the eradication of family, kith, kin, and friendship in favor of the One Whose Name is Legion.

For Savo Tushevlyak, whose mother had died for want of drugs (she had Parkinson's Disease, in controllable form, but that was before the embargo), there was nothing but a wild, aching expectation of a return to Sarajevo—his Sarajevo—from which he had escaped in the spring of 1992, after having been stopped by a Muslim patrol. Then, Savo's mother was still alive, and he, dressed in suit and tie, was asked to show his papers by snickering men in shoddy clothes, armed with Kalashnikovs. "Savo," a militiaman read out, and an obese man looked at him long and hard from the shadows of an apartment-house entrance. Pondering his fate, he waved him on with his fat index finger, saying nothing, and Tushevlyak continued on his way, feeling the oncoming bullet between his shoulder blades.

There was no bullet, however, but "a man lives as long as he wishes, while only a fool lives until he dies," goes a Serb proverb. So Savo Tushevlyak sent his mother and father to Lukavica to stay with some family, while he ran through the Muslim lines, past the armed guards put there by Alija Izetbe-

govic to prevent anyone—Muslim, Croat, and Serb alike—from leaving his "multiconfessional, multiethnic, multicultural" paradise. Alija Izetbegovic, and Haris Silajdzic, and Ejup Ganic, and Muhamed Sacirbey (once upon a time, a *Sacirbegovic*) could all wait until they died: after she fell off her toilet seat, Savo's mother had stopped eating and just withered away, so Savo Tushevlyak—no hero, but a man of honor—hid his .357 magnum revolver in a milk carton, along with 300 bullets, and told the Muslim guard there was a Serb sniper lurking somewhere around, before walking on, uphill, to freedom, and the Pale.

Up in the high country opposite Leadstone (and the village of Musici, whose Muslim residents had killed off their Serb neighbors in 1941), Tushevlyak held his army-issue M72 and listened to the forest breathe, trying to set apart the sound of the coon, the stray dog, or the pack rat from the sound of murderers creeping toward us, as they did back in 1941, and 1914, and 1908, and all the way back to 1463, when 10,000 Bosnian Serb renegades converted to Islam under the walls of Jajce, having forgotten what being a man is all about.

The renegades (ancestors of Izetbegovic, Silajdzic, Ganic, and their ilk) had converted to save their lives and feudal privileges, under the watchful eyes of Sultan Mehmed II, the Conqueror, the destroyer of Constantinople, the last (until then) in the long line of Huns, Avars, Bulgars, Pechenegs, Kumans, Seljuks, Mongols, Ottomans—*Turks all*—who kept coming at us—the men of Lugh, Apollo, or Christ—like perpetual headsmen, skillful only in treachery, mayhem, and genocide.

Tushevlyak, like myself, could not stop wondering what had made the United States, NATO, and the West in general nurture the Turks—and our own, home-grown "Turks" as well—like a pack of pitbull terriers, bred to devour their owner.

And the chance will not be lacking: Tushevlyak knew that, as did his 75-year-old father, who manned our line down in Lukavica, the part of Sarajevo (along with Nedjarici, Ilidza, or Grbavica) no Western TV crew ever visited because it was suffering a worse fate than any Muslim quarter, and no Serbs could be blamed for it. A Confederate peering through the darkness toward the "internationally-held" Sarajevo airport (the

Fort Sumter of a later age), like a legionary of Diocletian, or Constantine, armed with an automatic rifle, Savo Tushevlyak's father defended the Pale, next to last in the long line of defenders of the honor and the dignity of human life, made holy only by his faith in Christ, the white man who had come down upon us from God, like a news-bearer of the coming Apocalypse.

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## Letter From Italy

by Marco Respinti

### The Reagan Coalition



Italy experienced a revolutionary election on March 27, 1994, an election in which many Italian voters could make a difference. This mood of optimism and engagement stood in stark contrast to the many elections that have left Italians so disillusioned in recent years—local administrative elections, national elections to two houses of Parliament, and even international elections for the European Parliament, to say nothing of referenda.

There are several reasons for this growing estrangement from the electoral process, but in fundamental terms, Italian society (i.e., the real country) has separated from the political class (the legal country). The case of Italy reveals the paradox of modern democracy, in which the ruling class ends up constituting a *nomenclatura* far removed from the real problems and needs of the average citizen. Voter apathy is a common problem within the West, but Italian apathy is aggravated by the knowledge that Italy has been ruled, since World War II, by the Christian Democrats (DC). Even if the DC did accomplish its mission—stopping the great communist threat in 1948—the DC has failed to give birth to a sound government based on its "Christian inspiration." On the

contrary, the DC has smoothed the way toward national secularization and made it possible for subversive radicalism to advance at a steady pace, despite the fact that Italy is still a Christian and “conservative” nation. At the very least, the DC allowed this process to grow. It let the radicals and the communists gain part of the cultural and political power in the country, even if they never actually ruled the country (they came very close, when a coalition government between DC and the Communist Party was to be established by Giulio Andreotti and Enrico Berlinguer, in the second half of the 1970’s). The DC also invited the Italian Socialist Party (PSI)—a sort of liberal and technocratic group under Bettino Craxi—to share power in the 1980’s and allowed liberals and radicals to take over journals, newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, TV channels, and the academy.

When the Berlin Wall collapsed, many of the falling bricks hit the heads of Italy’s rulers. The DC, no longer needed to oppose the Italian Communist Party (PCI)—which was fueled by Moscow—has been sent packing, only to be pursued by revelations of bribery and corruption through the so-called *tangentopoli* investigation. Two years of covert investigations resulted in indictments and convictions that shook the ruling parties: this is why, all of a sudden, the DC and PSI disappeared from the public scene. But not the communists, who have been clever enough to revive their public image by riding the tiger of *mani pulite*, “clean hands”—the new ideology of “public honesty.” (*Mani pulite* is also the name of the judicial investigation that uncovered the “great robbery and bribery swindle,” but the phrase has come to mean much more.) The former PCI became the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS) and sailed through the storm of *tangentopoli*. Everyone seems to have forgotten that, thanks to *consociativism* (collaboration between the ruling party and the opposition), communists had actually joined—albeit indirectly—the Italian ruling class. So, untouched, renewed, and empowered by the November/December 1993 elections, PDS came to lead an electoral coalition called the “Progressives,” a huge alliance ranging from red hard-liners to ecologists, who were able to win the mayoral elections in most towns.

Rome itself witnessed a direct con-

frontation between Francesco Rutelli (a “green”) and Gianfranco Fini, leader of Movimento Sociale Italiano (MSI), thanks to the new majoritarian electoral law. On the eve of the vote in Rome, Silvio Berlusconi entered the arena by publicly saying that if he had been in Rome, he would have voted for Fini. The declaration was greeted by a great roar in the press. Until that moment Berlusconi was a powerful private manager, owning firms, newspapers, and three TV channels. Fini was the leader of what is often dismissed as a neofascist party, and for this he has been banished from the “respectables.”

The history of the MSI is too long to be told here, but one point is crucial. Since the liberal press has constantly warned against the potentially totalitarian element in Italian politics, many good-willed foreigners, out of ignorance, have been alarmed by MSI’s growing popularity. As a party the MSI was too complex for easy definition; even if neofascist nostalgia was one of the elements, the party, since the 1970’s, has tried to build a broad “national right-wing” alliance (the complete name of the party in fact is MSI-DN, Movimento Sociale Italiano-Destra Nazionale) of diverse elements—traditionalists, conservatives of various stripes, monarchists and so on, not all of them at home with fascism. Moreover, the “Final and Transitory Dispositions” of the Italian Constitution made it illegal to reorganize the fascist party under any form. The mere fact of MSI’s legal existence indicated a public, albeit tacit, recognition that it was not an actual neofascist party.

Fini lost the 1993 election, and Rome still has its “green” mayor (Giulio Andreotti, who, famous for his sarcastic humor, used to say that environmentalists are just like tomatoes: as they ripen they turn from green to red). But something happened. What seemed to be a sure leftist (i.e., neocommunist) victory in the subsequent spring elections was thwarted by an outsider, Berlusconi.

In less than three months he was able to put together a party (Forza Italia) whose principal base of support comes from local civic groups opposed to the left. Working hard, Berlusconi succeeded in forging a strange coalition with his two major quarreling allies. The first is the Lega Nord (a kind of libertarian, federalist movement based mainly in Northern Italy, which *Chronicles* readers

have heard about from its editor), while the second is the MSI. Better to say the former MSI, since the party has been transformed into a broader right-wing coalition, the Alleanza Nazionale (AN). Cutting all ties with any remnants of fascism, the clever Fini is putting together a sort of rightist (in the United States it would be called “conservative”) party opposed to so-called Progressivism and dedicated to rebuilding the nation both morally and politically.

In March 1994, Berlusconi’s coalition won the elections, defying all predictions and canceling the hopes of many big-business liberals, who were ready to jump on the neocommunists’ bandwagon. Since then, the reconstructed DC (whose present name is Partito Popolare Italiano, or PPI) and the Progressives have had their ups and downs, especially the neocommunists—they held on to much of the power they already enjoyed, so that they could challenge Prime Minister Berlusconi and stall his programs. The coalition in Parliament—as Angelo Codevilla has described it, a sort of “Reagan Coalition, Italian Style,” including libertarian, traditionalist, nationalist, Christian, neoconservative, and anticommunist branches, plus a small but influential number of liberal-libertines—with its nonprogressive base of voters fed up with years of leftist misrule, now calls for economic reform. As during the Reagan years in the United States, this is the result of a “quasi-hidden” silent majority. The similarity does not end here, since in Italy, as in America, the dispossessed opposition in Parliament (Congress) has stirred up a ferocious attack on the Prime Minister with the support of the liberal press.

Two observations on this comparison. The first is that the parallel itself ends here. In many respects, Italy has experienced the opposite trend to the one in the United States. America has seen the growth of a conservative popular consensus and the emergence of a more serious alliance of right-wing scholars and intellectuals. What made the Reagan and Buchanan coalitions possible was a public grounded in American tradition. Italy, at least since World War II, seems to have forgotten its roots, and its identity as a conservative Catholic country. The history of the cultural conflict with the Catholic Church is another topic that would lead us far afield, but the results are still visible today. He who misunderstands history mistakes

present-day policy. If we fail to grapple with the *Risorgimento* (the long historical and ideological process that led to national independence and unity in the 19th century) and its aftermath—the “reconstruction” of Italian people when the heirs of the Jacobins won the war against traditional Italians—we will never build a sound “conservative” alliance to rule the country. And any reforms will be superficial.

But even if we have lost our memory, the March 1994 elections are a small sign of hope. I do not trust elections or “new governments” as such, but the dynamics of the spring vote are highly relevant. Berlusconi was able to forge a winning national party because he was clever enough to poll the attitudes throughout Italy. He actually asked people about their hopes, needs, and feelings. It was on the survey results that he built his winning agenda.

This is obviously a dangerous way to conduct politics, since it can slip into a tyranny of the masses. But the opinions have been constructive, and Italians have displayed a common sense that seems almost unbelievable in the age of television. They asked for less government, private enterprise, sound values, and they affirmed the traditional Italian

principles of family and religion. This is why, nowadays, Gianfranco Fini is becoming the most popular political leader in the country (as Berlusconi himself recognizes and other allies fear), and not only in the Center and the South of the country, while Berlusconi holds his position and Bossi’s Lega Nord has its own problems (an internal feud and deteriorating public opinion after Bossi’s continuing attack against AN, Forza Italia, and the government of which his own party was a pillar). Fini, in fact, seems to personify exactly the agenda that Italians expressed in Berlusconi’s polls, or at least he gives the impression that he is the one who can best advance it.

Berlusconi’s government could have been one of the last political chances for Italy. Its enemies—the leftists—knew this, and they did everything they could to block its way. At home, the “Reagan Coalition, Italian style” had to guard itself against both a split in its coalition, as happened to the conservative alliance in the United States after Reagan, and the many George Bushes and James Bakers that could jump out of the top hat.

While Italians still fear this, a final split within the government coalition (the second threat) eventually came, thanks to Bossi. After months of attacks from the oppositions in Parliament (Rocco Buttiglione’s PPI and the Progressives, led by Massimo D’Alema’s PDS), combined with growing though “indirect” hostility from the judiciary—and the combative media—Berlusconi resigned on December 22.

Deprived for months of the support of his former ideologue, Gianfranco Miglio, who left the Lega and became an independent member of Parliament in support of Berlusconi’s government, Bossi saw in PDS and PPI new horses to ride. For the first time in its history, there were significant protests against its leader by pro-government *leghisti* (some 30 members of Parliament led by Senator Marcello Staglieno, while Minister of the Interior Roberto Maroni, a *leghista*, seemed to play on both Bossi’s and Berlusconi’s sides) who wished to conserve what has been called the “Pole of Liberties and of Good Government” (Berlusconi’s network of coalitions). Curiously enough, Bossi always denounced PDS as the heir of gigantic communist statism, and PPI as the heir of a corrupted and statist DC—issues later forgotten.

Note that with the new majoritarian

electoral law (though imperfect, Italian style), Italians voted for a precise government and not for parties responsible for making and unmaking alliances at a later date with no respect for the will of the voters. Unable to form a new majority in Parliament and fearing the popular response (their programs being so different), the Lega, PPI, and PDS invented a “technical” government ruled by a man *super partes*, also called “government of the President” because the Prime Minister would be chosen by this institutional chief. That is a gentle way of upsetting the popular votes, thus advancing the most dangerous, clever, and seasoned of the oppositions—PDS. Berlusconi’s alliance presented its call for new elections as a way to observe the rule of democracy (which I do not think is the avatar of any Absolute Spirit, but which is the system ruling Italy and thus has to be respected by people mouthing its rhetoric).

While PPI’s Roberto Formigoni tried to distinguish himself from the PDS-PPI coalition (a love affair sponsored by D’Alema and Buttiglione, but highly criticized by the Italian bishops), President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro, who is supposed to act as a man above the parties out of respect for the Constitution, actually played (to say the least) a more ambiguous role. Born a Christian Democrat and elected by Parliament prior to the March 27 election, the president appears to be tied to “palace politics”—a way of molding and kneading a lust for power in the old DC custom by using moderate votes to give *de facto* power to the left, regardless of the will of the voters. As the major threat, PDS applies the old political rule of *divide et impera*, dividing Berlusconi’s coalition and thus completing the strategy of *solve et coagula*—making, unmaking, using, and destroying alliances (PPI and Lega) for the sake of power and ideology.

History is on the run in Italy, and every day brings something new. But regardless of what happens by the time this article is published, one thing is sure: Berlusconi’s government—“The Reagan Coalition, Italian Style”—despite its mistakes and inadequacies, was salutary for this country and indicated a way of reform. It may only have been a first step in a long run, but if we turn away from this path, or something similar, the future will be grey and dangerous. Reconstruction, restoration, and counterrevolution are long and slow pro-

Dispatches from



## The Last Ditch

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cesses, not unlike subversion, deconstruction, and revolution. To turn back a 50-year tide is tantamount to going forward, for in the words of G.S. Halifax in his *Political, Moral and Miscellaneous Thoughts and Reflections*, "the best Qualification of a Prophet is to have a good Memory." We must look deeper into our national past, which we will be able to do only after resolving the present Sea of Troubles and defeating the still mounting wave of liberal progressivism.

Marco Respinti is finishing a dissertation on American conservatism at the Catholic University of Milan.

## Letter From the East Village

by Mark Racho

### Generation X



Generation X, to which I belong, is a pious generation. You can easily become alienated from it unless you adopt the correct attitudes. Without the sociopolitical skills that today masquerade as good manners, it is quite possible to talk one's way into trouble. The last time I felt threatened by educated middle-class people was in Poland before the fall of communism. Now it can easily happen at an American university or at a dinner party.

Recently I went to a party in the East Village that set off unpleasant recollections of an experience I had on a train journey from Warsaw to Lublin in 1986. During the trip my fellow passengers, noticing that I spoke Polish with a foreign accent, had been kind to me, shared food, and struck up convivial conversation. Then I mentioned the single word "Katyn," the place where Stalin's NKVD ruthlessly murdered 5,000 Polish officers. Suddenly all fell silent. I was a Russian spy, or a member of the hated *Milicja* sent to test them. Or maybe I was merely ignorant.

"Stupid boy," said a neatly dressed middle-aged woman, "you don't know

what you're prattling about." I received frowns, and the other passengers began to eye each other, wondering which one might be an informer. What had begun as a pleasant journey ended in almost complete silence, and anger was directed at me for spoiling the trip. I got off the train and as I walked down the platform, footsteps followed mine. A young lady who had been sitting in the corner of my compartment called after me. I stopped. She told me that it was not safe to bring up topics like Katyn in a public place. After we had talked a little and parted, I remembered that my brother had been arrested for loose talk ten years ago. He had been on holiday, too. They released him after a night.

It is farfetched to compare the atmosphere under a totalitarian communist regime with an East Village party, and yet later, after I had been thrown out of the party, the comparison seemed less and less outlandish. The party was held in the loft of a "musician" (most members of Generation X seem to be musicians, painters, or writers, although their abilities usually lie in other directions), and there was a poster of the recently deceased River Phoenix on the wall. This I took to be satirical in intent. The only person I knew there was the host, whose new girlfriend had allowed him to use the loft. The partygoers, six or seven of them, welcomed me into their cool little world. At first I managed to create a good impression by latching on to the general attitude of "we're all so genuine, so real, so caring." This care had, of course, to be balanced by a contemptuous tone about almost everything other than those "issues" that exercise the feeble moral muscles of the young. I noticed that their college educations had taught them nothing but the neatest orthodoxy, and consequently their world was one of rampant "racism," "sexism," "homophobia," and also something they liked to call "oppression." (Having heard real stories of oppression from my parents, exiled to Siberia, I found this amusing.) They loved activists, and the "community" even more. They had love in their hearts and were full of tenderness and tolerance. Their loathing (often tempered by a tone of saintly resignation to the evils of the world) was reserved for the government's conduct of foreign affairs, especially in Central America, and for the CIA.

I heard a young woman about 25

years old talking about the difficulties of dating. "I met this guy, he seemed really nice, I'd have gone out with him like a shot . . . but then I found out he was a Republican . . ." I made reference to *Romeo and Juliet* and *amor omnia vincit*. A young she-professor of English in her 30's, the oldest person there and therefore an authority on many things (the Brady Bunch perhaps?), told me that quoting Latin was an elitist irrelevance and continued her earnest discussion of sexism and supernumerary antitropes in Foucault. I went to help with the cooking.

So far everything was perfectly friendly and civil, and people were generally laying off politics except for an odd insult directed at Mayor Giuliani. Keeping my tongue firmly bridled so as not to make jokes or comments that would offend any group or go against any received opinion, I took refuge in absurd humor, doing impressions of famous people and acting like Robin Williams in *Mork and Mindy*. As Generation X is a TV-loving generation, this went down very well. The partygoers were beginning to like me, and in fact my goofiness was even starting to rub off some of their cool veneer. Dinner was to consist of lobster and crab, and the host and I plunged the clawing beasts into boiling water with elaborate ceremony. Someone put a live lobster under his T-shirt and acted out the famous birth scene from *Alien* to much hilarity. Somehow this led to talk of orgasms. Ah, this was my generation indeed. Nothing was too vulgar; shameless sexual talk and double entendres flew; we were free, tolerant, and hip.

We sat down to eat, and I listened to the conversations around me. A tone of "caring" and piety indicated which ones were becoming serious. Just as earlier generations have been sickened by the smug hypocrisy inherent in certain words and phrases used by their elders—"duty" and "*pro patria mori*" during World War I, for instance—so I find myself nauseated by the buzzwords of my own generation. We cant about "issues" and "inclusion" in the same glib tone that the baby-boomers used when talking about "openness" and "revolution." Generation X knows itself to be right. That righteousness can be summed by observing the differences in ancient and modern pop music. In the 60's, the Rolling Stones roared out "Brown Sugar" with its "Gold Coast slaver bound