**VENICE**

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*Address delivered to the ICLC Conference near Wiesbaden, Germany, Easter Sunday, 1981; (appeared in Campaigner, September, 1981)*

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*Appeared in Fidelio, Summer 1995*

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*From ICLC Conference panel titled: "The Axioms of the American System," Feb. 18, 1996; (appeared in New Federalist, March 18, 1996)*

**THE VENETIAN CONSPIRACY**

*Address delivered to the ICLC Conference near Wiesbaden, Germany, Easter Sunday, 1981; (appeared in Campaigner, September, 1981)*

Periods of history marked, like the one we are living through, by the convulsive instability of human institutions pose a special challenge for those who seek to base their actions on adequate and authentic knowledge of historical process. Such knowledge can come only through viewing history as the lawful interplay of contending conspiracies pitting Platonists against their epistemological and political adversaries.

There is no better way to gain insight into such matters than through the study of the history of the Venetian oligarchy, the classic example of oligarchical despotism and evil outside of the Far East.

Venice called itself the *Serenissima Republica* (Serene Republic), but it was no republic in any sense comprehensible to an American, as James Fenimore Cooper points out in the preface to his novel The Bravo. But its sinister institutions do provide an unmatched continuity of the most hideous oligarchical rule for fifteen centuries and more, from the years of the moribund Roman Empire in the West to the Napoleonic Wars, only yesterday in historical terms. Venice can best be thought of as a kind of conveyor belt, transporting the Babylonian contagions of decadent antiquity smack dab into the world of modern states.

The more than one and one-half millennia of Venetian continuity is first of all that of the oligarchical families and the government that was their stooge, but it is even more the relentless application of a characteristic method of statecraft and political intelligence. Venice, never exceeding a few hundred thousand in population, rose to the status of Great Power in the thirteenth century, and kept that status until the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, thanks to the most highly developed system of embassies, of domestic and foreign intelligence, and related operational potentials.

As the following story details, Venice was at the center of the efforts to destroy the advanced European civilization of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, and bears a crushing burden of guilt for the ascendancy of the Black Guelphs and the coming of the black plague. The Venetians were the intelligencers for the Mongol army of Ghengis Khan and his heirs, and had a hand in guiding them to the sack of Baghdad and the obliteration of its renaissance in the thirteenth century.

The Venetians were the mortal enemies of the humanist Paleologue dynasty in Byzantium. They were the implacable foes of Gemisthos Plethon, Cosimo de' Medici, Leonardo da Vinci, Niccolo Machiavelli, and the entirety of the Florentine Golden Renaissance, which they conspired - successfully - to destroy. Venetian influence was decisive in cutting off the Elizabethan epoch in England, and in opening the door to the lugubrious Jacobean era.

Venetian public relations specialists were responsible for picking up the small-time German provincial heretic Martin Luther and raising him to the big-time status of heresiarch among a whole herd of total- predestination divines. Not content with this wrecking operation against the Church, Venice was thereafter the "mother" for the unsavory, itinerant Ignatius of Loyola and his Jesuit order. After the Council of Trent, Venice was also the matrix for the *Philosophe- Libertin* ferment of the delphic, anti-Leibniz Enlightenment. Venice beat Thomas Malthus and Jeremy Bentham to the punch in inflicting British political economy and philosophical radicalism on the whole world.

Although Napoleon Bonaparte had the merit of forcing the formal liquidation of this loathsome organism during his Italian campaign of 1797, his action did not have the effect we would have desired. The cancer, so to speak, had already had ample time for metastasis - into Geneva, Amsterdam, London, and elsewhere. Thus, though the sovereign political power of Venice had been extinguished, its characteristic method lived on, serving as the incubator of what the twentieth century knows as fascism, first in its role as a breeding ground for the protofascist productions of Wagner and Nietzsche, later in the sponsorship of fascist politicians like Gabriele D'Annunzio and Benito Mussolini. The Venetians ran a large chunk of the action associated with the Parvus Plan to dismember Russia, and may well have been the ones who surprised everyone, including London, by unleashing World War 1 in the Balkans.

Most important, Venice is today through its Cini Foundation and its *Societé Europeenne de Culture* the think tank and staging area for the Club of Rome and related deployments. Venice is the supranational homeland of the New Dark Ages gang, the unifying symbol for the most extreme Utopian lunatic fringe in the international intelligence community today.

Get to know Venice. Then look back to the monetarist imbecility of Paul Volker, at the ideological fanaticism that radiates forth from the Bank of America, Chase Manhattan, the Bank for International Settlements and the rest. You will recognize the unmistakable putrid stench of a Venetian canal, where the rotting marble palaces of generations of parasites are corroded by the greatest cynicism and cruelty the world has ever known.

**THE ORIGINS**

In the Middle Ages the Venetians were known as the archetypes of the parasite, the people who "neither sow nor reap." For the Greeks, they were the hated "frogs of the marshes." In Germany, a folk tale describes the merchant of Venice as an aged Pantaloon who makes his rounds robbing men of their human hearts and leaving a cold stone in their place.

Closer to the essence of Venice is the city's symbol, the winged lion of St. Mark, bearing the misleading inscription, *Pax Tibi Marce, Evangelista Meus* ("Peace be with you Mark, my evangelist.") The chimerical winged lion comes out of the East, either from Persia or from China. The symbol is thus blatantly pagan, with St. Mark being added as an afterthought because of his alleged visit to the Venetian lagoons. To buttress the story, the Venetians stole St. Mark's body from Alexandria in Egypt, and Tintoretto has a painting celebrating this feat.

The point is that Venice looks East, toward the Levant, Asia Minor, central Asia, and the Far East, toward its allies among the Asian and especially Chinese oligarchies which were its partners in trade and war. This is reflected in a whole range of weird, semi-oriental features of Venetian life, most notably the secluded, oriental status of women, with Doges like Mocenigo proudly exhibiting a personal harem well into modern times.

Venice today sits close to the line from Lubeck to Trieste, the demarcation between NATO and Warsaw Pact Europe, roughly corresponding to the boundary between Turks in the East and Christians in the West, and still earlier between the Holy Roman and Byzantine Empires. Into this part of the northern Adriatic flow the rivers of the southern side of the Dolomites and the Julian Alps. The greatest of these is the Po. These rivers, around 300 A.D., made the northern Adriatic a continuous belt of marshes and lagoons about fifteen kilometers wide, and extending from the city of Ravenna around to the base of the Istrian Peninsula, where the Italian- Yugoslavian border lies today.

In the center of this system was Aquileia, starting point of an important north-south trade route across the Brenner Pass to the Danube Valley and Bohemia. Aquileia was the seat of a patriarch of the Christian Church, but its tradition was overwhelmingly pagan, and typified by rituals of the Ancient Egyptian Isis cult. For a time after the year 404, Ravenna and not Rome was the capital of the Roman Empire in the West. After the extinction of the western empire, Ravenna was the seat of government of Theodoric the Ostrogoth, the court visited by Boethius. Later Ravenna was the capital of a part of Italy ruled by the Byzantines.

The islands of the lagoons provided an invulnerable refuge, comparable to Switzerland during World War II, for Roman aristocrats and others fleeing the paths of Goth, Hun, and Langobard armies. Already between 300 and 400 A.D. there are traces of families whose names will later become infamous: Candiano, Faliero, Dandolo. Legend has it that the big influx of refugees came during the raids of Attila the Hun in 452 A.D. Various areas of the lagoons were colonized, including the present site of Torcello, before the seat of administration was fixed at a group of islands known as Rivus Altus ("the highest bank"), later the Rialto, the present location of the city of Venice. The official *Ab Urbe Condita* is March 25, 721 A.D. Paoluccio Anafesto, the first ruler of the lagoon communities, called the doge (the Venetian equivalent of Latin *dux* or Florentine *duca/duce*, meaning leader or duke), is said to have been elected in the year 697.

The most significant fact of this entire period is that the whelp of what was later to become Venice survived and grew thanks to its close alliance with the evil Emperor Justinian in Constantinople, an alliance that was underlined in later years by intermarriage of doge and other leading Venetian oligarchs with the nobility of Byzantium, where a faction embodying the sinister traditions of the Roman Senate lived on for a thousand years after the fall of Rome in 476.

Venetian families are divided into two categories. First come the oldest families, or *Longhi*, who can claim to prove their nobility substantially before the year 1000. The Longhi include many names that are sadly familiar to the student of European history: Dandolo, Michiel, Morosini, Contarini, Giustinian (perhaps related to the just- mentioned Byzantine emperor), Zeno, Corner (or Cornaro), Gradenigo, Tiepolo, and Falier. These old families held a monopoly of the dogeship until 1382, at which time they were forced to admit the parvenu newcomers, or *Curti*, to the highest honor of the state. After this time new families like Mocenigo, Foscari, Malipiero, Vendramin, Loredano, Gritti, Dona, and Trevisan came into the ascendancy.

These families and the state they built grew rich through their parasitizing of trade, especially East-West trade, which came to flow overwhelmingly through the Rialto markets. But there is a deeper reality, one which even derogatory stories about spice merchants are designed to mask. The primary basis for Venetian opulence was slavery. This slavery was practiced as a matter of course against Saracens, Mongols, Turks, and other non-Christians. In addition, it is conclusively documented that it was a matter of standard Venetian practice to sell Christians into slavery. This included Italians and Greeks, who were most highly valued as galley slaves. It included Germans and Russians, the latter being shipped in from Tana, the Venetian outpost at the mouth of the Don, in the farthest corner of the Sea of Azov. At a later time, black Africans were added to the list and rapidly became a fad among the nobility of the republic.

**THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SLAVERY**

During the years of the Venetian overseas empire, islands like Crete, Cyprus, Corfu, Naxos, and smaller holdings in the Aegean were routinely worked by slave labor, either directly under the Venetian regime, or under the private administration of a Venetian oligarchical clan like the Corner, who owed their riches to such slavery. In later centuries, the harems of the entire Ottoman Empire, from the Balkans to Morocco, were stocked by Venetian slaves. The shock troops of the Ottoman Turkish armies, the Janissaries, were also largely provided by Venetian merchants. A section of the Venetian waterfront is still called *Riva Degli Schiavoni* - slaves' dock.

Around 1500, the Venetian oligarch Cristofor da Canal, the leading admiral of the *Serenissima Repubblica* at that time, composed what he described as a Platonic dialogue concerning the relative merits of galley slaves: the Italians the worst, Dalmatians better, the Greeks the best and toughest of all, although personally filthy and repulsive. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Venice had treaty relations with other states, like Bavaria, by which convicts were delivered to the Serenissima to work as life-long galley slaves.

Indistinguishable from slave gathering operation were piracy and buccaneering, the other staples of the Venetian economy. Wars with Genoa or with other powers were eagerly sought-after opportunities to loot the enemy's shipping with clouds of corsairs, and victory or defeat usually depended more on the success of the privateering than on the direct combat of the galleys, cogs, and soldiers of the battle fleets.

Piracy shades over imperceptibly into routine commerce. Through decades of treachery and mayhem, the Venetians were able to establish themselves as the leading entrepot port of the Mediterranean world, where, as in London up to 1914, the vast bulk of the world's strategic commodities were brought for sale, warehousing, and transshipment. The most significant commodities were spices and silks from India and China, destined for markets in Central and Western Europe. Europe in turn produced textiles and metals, especially precious metals, for export to the East.

Venetian production from the earliest period until the end was essentially nil, apart from salt and the glass manufactures of Murano. The role of the Venetian merchant is that of the profiteering middleman who rooks both buyer and seller, backing up his monopolization of the distribution and transportation systems with the war galleys of the battle fleet.

The Venetian approach to trade was ironically dirigistic. Venice asserted a monopoly of all trade and shipping in the northern Adriatic. The Serenissima's own functionaries organized merchant galley fleets that were sent out one or two times a year to key ports. The galleys were built by the regime in its shipyards, known as the Arsenal, for many centuries the largest factory in the world. They were leased to oligarchs and consortia of oligarchs at a type of auction. Every detail of the operation of these galley fleets, including the obligation to travel in convoy, was stipulated by peremptory state regulation.

In the heyday of Venice, galley fleets were sent to Tana and to Trebizond in the Black Sea, to Crete, Rhodes, and Cyprus on the way to Beirut in the Levant, to Tunis, Tripoli, Algiers, Oran, and Alexandria in North Africa, as well as to Spanish, French, and west coast Italian cities. Especially well-served was "Romania," the area roughly corresponding to modern Greece. Another galley route passed through Gibraltar on the way to Southampton, London, Antwerp, and Bruges.

Many of these galley ports correspond to continuing Venetian influence today. In every instance the Venetians sought to skim the cream off the top of world trade. Their profit margins had to be sufficient to cover a "traditional" twenty percent interest rate, the financing of frequent wars, and maritime insurance premiums, in which they were pioneers.

**THE VENETIAN STATE**

The tremendous stability of the Venetian state has fascinated historians. How is it possible to maintain the great power of Venice for more than a millennium and a half without being conquered from the outside, and without significant upheavals from within?

Venice remained impervious to foreign invasion from the first settlement until 1797. The monolithic iniquity of Venetian state institutions was seriously disturbed no more than a half dozen times from within the city, and such incidents were speedily terminated by bloodbaths that restored stability rather than spurring more violence. This feature of the Venetian oligarchical system contrasts sharply with that of its rival, Genoa, where each regime from 1300 to 1500 had the life expectancy of an Italian government today. It contrasts sharply with the papacy, where the highest office was up for grabs every dozen years or less, and where humanist factions could sometimes prevail.

In Venice, the bloody resolution of internal faction fights within the oligarchy was suppressed to a minimum, and these energies were effectively sublimated in the depredation of the outside world. The raging heteronomy of each oligarch was directed outward, not at his factional rivals. In the typology of Plato's Republic, Venice is an oligarchy, "a constitution according to property, in which the rich govern and the poor man has no share in government," "the rule of the few, constitution full of many evils." This oligarchy has a residue of timocracy, of rule based on honor. But at the same time the Venetian regime was perversely aware of Plato's description of the swift transition from oligarchy to democracy and thence to tyranny, and against this evolution the patriciate took measures.

Plato notes in Book VIII of The Republic that a "change in a constitution always begins from the governing class when there is a faction within; but so long as they are of one mind, even if they be a very small class, it is impossible to disturb them." The threat of factionalization is located in the "storehouse full of gold, which every man has," and which "destroys such a constitution." The oligarchs "lay a sum of money, greater or less, according as the oligarchy is more or less complete, and proclaim that no one may share in the government unless his property comes up to the assessment. This they carry out by force of arms, or they have used terror before this to establish such a constitution."

Venice lasted as long as it did because of the effective subordination of the oligarchs and families to the needs of the oligarchy as a whole, by the ironclad delimitation of noble status to those already noble in 1297 and their male descendants, and by continuous terror against the masses and against the nobility itself.

All male members of the approximately one hundred fifty noble families had the permanent right to a seat in the *Gran Consiglio*, or Great Council, which grew to 2000 members around 1500 and thereafter slowly declined. The seat in the Gran Consiglio and the vote it brought were thus independent of which faction happened to be calling the shots at a given moment. The ins might be in, but the outs were sure of their place in the Gran Consiglio, and this body elected the key governing bodies of the regime.

The first of these were the one hundred twenty members, or *Pregadi*, of the Senate, the upper house which oversaw foreign affairs by choosing the Venetian ambassadors. In the middle of the fifteenth century, Venice was the first and only power which regularly maintained permanent legations in all principal courts and capitals. The Senate also chose five war ministers, five naval ministers (all called *Savi*), and six *Savii Grandi*, ministers of still higher rank.

The Gran Consiglio elected a Council of Forty, which was first devoted to budget and finance matters, later more to criminal prosecution. The Gran Consiglio chose three state prosecutors, who could and did sue any official of the state for malfeasance, although the doge was accorded the privilege of being tried after his death, with his family paying any fines levied. The Gran Consiglio also elected the doge himself, through an incredible Byzantine procedure designed to assure a representative choice. First, thirty members of the Gran Consiglio were chosen at random, using colored balls whose Venetian name is the origin of the American word *ballot*. These thirty drew lots to cut their number down to nine, who then nominated and elected a new group of forty electors. These were then cut down by drawing lots to a group of twelve. This procedure was repeated several times, terminating with a group of forty-one electors of whom twenty-five could nominate a doge for the approval of the Gran Consiglio. Somewhat less complicated procedures were used to select a group of six advisors for the doge.

Most typical of the Venetian system is the Council of Ten, established in 1310 as the coordinating body for foreign and domestic political intelligence operations. Meeting in secret session together with the doge and his six advisors, the Ten had the power to issue a bill of capital attainder against any person inside Venetian jurisdiction, or abroad. If in Venice, that person was generally strangled the same night and the body thrown into the *Canale degli Orfani*.

The Ten had at their disposal a very extensive foreign intelligence network, but it was inside Venetian territory that their surveillance powers became pervasive: the contents of any discussion among oligarchs or citizens was routinely known to the Ten within twenty- four hours or less, thanks to the ubiquity of its informers and spies. Visitors to the Doge's Palace today can see mail slots around the outside of the building in the shape of lion's mouths marked *Per Denontie Segrete* ("For Secret Denunciations") for those who wished to call to the attention of the Ten and their monstrous bureaucracy individuals stealing from the state or otherwise violating the law. Death sentences from the Ten were without appeal, and their proceedings were never made public. Offenders simply disappeared from view.

The Venetian regime is a perverse example of the "checks and balances" theory of statecraft, and there were indeed a myriad of such feedback mechanisms. The Savii Grandi balanced the powers of the doge, who was also checked by his six advisors, while more and more power passed to the state inquisitors and the chiefs of the Ten. The state attorneys acted as watchdogs on most matters, as did the Senate, and in times of crises the Gran Consiglio would also assert its powers. The Ten were constantly lurking in the background.

Almost all officials except the doge were elected for terms averaging between six months and one year, with stringent provision against being reelected to an office until a number of months had passed equal to the oligarch's previous tenure in that post. This meant that leading oligarchs were constantly being rotated and shunted from one stop on the *Cursus Honorum* to another: to *Savio Grande* to ducal advisor to state inquisitor and so forth. There was no continuity of the population of Venice; the continuity was located only in the oligarchy. In fact, the population of the city seemed unable to reproduce itself. Venice suffered astronomical rates of mortality from malaria and the plague - its canals, it must be remembered, were first and foremost its sewer system. The decimated natives were continually replenished by waves of immigration, so much so that the Frenchman Philippe de Comynes, an adversary of Machiavelli, could report that the population was mostly foreigners.

Internal order was entrusted to an intricate system of local control in each of the city's sixty parishes, meshing with an elaborate apparatus of corporatist guilds called the *Scuole*. This was supplemented by an unending parade of festivals, spectacles, and carnivals. Very few troops were usually stationed in the city.

So much for the phenomena. Reality was located in the fact that an elite of ten to fifteen families out of the one hundred fifty effectively ruled with an iron hand. Various Venetian diarists let the cat out of the bag in their descriptions of corruption and vote-buying, especially the bribery of the impoverished decadent nobility, called *Barnabotti*, who were increasingly numerous in the Gran Consiglio. The regime ran everything, and offices of all types were routinely sold.

This reality of graft was also known to Dante. The poetical geometry of Canto 21 of the *Inferno*, the canto of the grafters or *Barattieri*, is established by a reference to the Venetian Arsenal and the pitch used to caulk the hulls of the galleys:

As in the Arsenal of the Venetians
Boils in the winter the tenacious pitch
To smear their leaky vessels over again,
For sail they cannot.

The souls of the grafters are immersed in the boiling pitch, where they are guarded by the *Malebranche*, grotesque winged monsters armed with spears and hooks: a fitting allegory for the souls of the Venetians.

Dante visited Venice in 1321, acting in his capacity as diplomatic representative of the nearby city of Ravenna, whose overlord was for a time his protector. He died shortly after leaving Venice. The two explanations of his death converge on murder: one version state that he was denied a boat in which to travel south across the lagoon. He was forced to follow a path through the swamps, caught malaria, and died. Another version says that a boat was available, but that to board it would have meant certain assassination. Venetian records regarding this matter have conveniently disappeared.

**PETRARCH VERSUS ARISTOTLE**

The Venetian method of statecraft is based on Aristotle - the deepest Aristotelian tradition in the West. Long before the era of Albertus Magnus (1193-1280) and St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), Venice had established itself as the chief center for the translation and teaching of Aristotle's works.

In the year 1135, the Senate sent Giacomo da Venezia to Byzantium, where he was trained in post-Justinian Aristotelian orthodoxy, returning to Venice after two years to begin lectures on Aristotle and to prepare Latin versions of the Greek texts he had brought back with him. A school of Aristotelian doctrine was set up at the Rialto market, the heart of the business and commercial activity of the city. When Venice conquered Padua at the beginning of the fifteenth century, Aristotelian hegemony was imposed on the University of Padua, which became the only one where Venetian nobility were allowed international clientele, especially from Germany.

The inveterate Aristotelianism of Venice is the starting point for a major literary attack on that city by Francesco Petrarch, son of Dante's personal secretary, who took up the responsibility of servicing Dante's humanist networks during the disastrous years around the middle of the fourteenth century. Although these were the years of the Black Death, Petrarch ("Fraunces Petrak the laureate poet" as Chaucer knew him) was the soul of a tenacious humanist rearguard action, with spirited counterattacks at every opportunity, that made the later Italian Renaissance possible.

Petrarch was a contemporary of the Ciompi revolt against oligarchical rule in Florence; he was certainly involved in Cola di Rienzo's seizure of power in Rome in May, 1347. The real story of Petrarch's literary and political achievements has yet to be told. Nonetheless, the fact that he was a determined foe of Venice and its ideology is abundantly clear.

In 1355 Venice had just passed through one of its infrequent internal crises, usually explained as the attempt of the Doge Marin Faliero to overthrow the regime and establish a *Signoria*, or personal dictatorship, of the type common in Italy at the time. Marin Faliero was publicly decapitated by the Council of Ten.

Petrarch might have had a hand in this operation; during this period he was a frequent guest at the court of the Da Carrara rulers of Padua, about thirty kilometers from the Venetian lagoon. Petrarch may have developed plans for injecting a dose of Platonism into the intellectual life of the Serenissima. Petrarch proposed that he be allowed to take up residence in Venice and locate his library there; the books would remain as a bequest to the city after his death, forming the nucleus of what would have been the first public library in Europe. The Venice authorities accepted, and Petrarch, the most celebrated intellectual of his times, took up his residence on the *Riva degli Schiavoni*.

Soon he began to receive the visits of four Venetian Aristotelians, whom he later referred to as "my four famous friends." These four oligarchs were Tommaso Talenti, Guido da Bagnolo, Leonardo Dandolo, and Zaccaria Contarini, the latter two of the most exalted lineage. After several discussions with Petrarch, these four began to circulate the slander that Petrarch was "a good man, but without any education."

Petrarch shortly abandoned the library project and soon thereafter left Venice permanently. His answer to the slanderers is contained in his treatise "*De Sui Ipsius et Multorum Ignorantia*" (1367) (with a swipe at Aristotle in the title), his most powerful piece of invective- polemical writing.

Petrarch scored Aristotelian scholastic philosophy as "a prostitute who delights to worry about vain questions of words." Real philosophy, with the clear purpose of advancing morality, he said, is to be found in St. Augustine. All that Aristotle is capable of doing is providing a delphic description of what the external attributes of morality might look like. To the authority of Aristotle, Petrarch counterposed the Platonism of the New Testament, saying that Christ, not Aristotle, was for him the decisive guide. His "four friends," he asserted, were not Christian, but preferred to follow their favorite philosopher in their sophistry, blasphemy, and impiety. They mocked Christ, and were so pretentious that they could not even understand their own arguments.

Petrarch pointed out that Aristotle provided his followers with all sorts of strange and curious lore, like the number of hairs on a lion's head or of feathers in a hawk's tail, how elephants copulate backwards, how the phoenix arises out of his own ashes, how the only animal that can move its upper jaw is the crocodile. But these facts are not only useless, he said, they are false. "How could Aristotle know such facts, since neither reason nor experience reveal them? Concerning the ultimate objects of philosophy, Aristotle is more ignorant than an old peasant woman.

Venetian nominalism went hand in hand with the most vicious avarice. In a play written in Venetian dialect by Carlo Goldoni in the eighteenth century, a Pantalone-type miser comes home to find wife and daughter busily engaged in needlework. The two women look up briefly and say hello. The miser flies into a rage screaming "What? You quit working to pay me compliments!"

An eminent witness of this typical Venetian vice was Erasmus of Rotterdam, who was to the years after 1500 what Petrarch had been in his own time: Leader of the Platonic humanist faction. Erasmus came to Venice in 1508, on the eve, interestingly enough, of the attempt to annihilate Venice in the War of the League of Cambrai. Erasmus came to get in touch with Aldo Manunzio, the Aldus who owned what was at that time the largest and most famous publishing house in the world.

Venice had reacted to the invention of moveable-type printing by Johannes Gutenberg of Mainz in a way that foreshadowed the reaction of the British oligarchy in this century to radio, the movies, and television. They had immediately attempted to seize control of the new medium. Dozens of Gutenberg's apprentices from the Rhein-Main area were bought up and brought to Venice, where the production of books up to 1500 and beyond was frequently a multiple of the number of titles published in the rest of the world combined.

Aldus was the William Paley and Jack Warner of the industry. Martin Luther was one of that industry's later creations. Aldus brought out the works of Aristotle in Greek shortly after he began operations in 1495. Plato had to wait for almost twenty years.

One of Erasmus' goals in visiting Venice was to accelerate the publication of Plato. He stayed at the home of Aldus' brother-in-law. Erasmus writes about his Venetian sojourn some time later, in the dialogue titled "*Opulentia Sordida*" of the Colloquia Familiaria. The *Urbs Opulenta* referred to is of course the wealthiest of all cities, Venice. Aldus appears as Antronius ("the caveman"), described as a multi- millionaire in today's terms.

Erasmus had been away, and is asked by a friend how he got so skinny. Has he been working as a galley slave? Erasmus replies that he has undergone something far worse: ten months of starvation in the home of Antronius. Here people freeze in the winter because there is no wood to burn. Wine was a strategic commodity in Erasmus' opinion, as indeed it was in a time when water was often very unsafe to drink. To save money on wine, Antronius took water and *faeces annorum decem miscebat* (mixed it with ten year old shit), stirring it up so it would look like the real thing. His bread was made not with flour, but with clay, and was so hard it would break even a bear's teeth. A groaning board on the holidays for a houseful of people and servants was centered around three rotten eggs. There was never meat or fish, but the usual fare was sometimes supplemented by shellfish from a colony that Antronius cultivated in his latrine. When Erasmus consulted a physician, he was told that he was endangering his life by overeating. Erasmus' friend in the dialogue concludes that at this rate, all Germans, Englishmen, Danes, and Poles are about to die. Finally, Erasmus takes his leave, to head for the nearest French restaurant.

**VENETIAN INTELLIGENCE**

What was the Venetian political intelligence method? The classical Venetian predicament is that of the weaker power attempting to play off two or more major empires. This was the case when the Venetian power was in its very infancy, and survival depended upon playing off the Langobard Kingdom of Italy against the Byzantines. This ploy was later replaced by the attempt to play the Byzantines off against the Carolingian Empire in the West, an attempt that almost misfired when the army of Charlemagne under Pippin laid siege to Venice inside its lagoons. That siege, however, was not successful.

In the eleventh century, the Venetians successfully incited the Norman barons operating out of Sicily under Robert Guiscard to attack Byzantium, and then moved in to offer the desperate Byzantines protection. The price for that protection was indicated by the famous Golden Bull of 1082, a decree of the Byzantine Emperor by which Venice acquired tax customs-free access to the whole of the eastern empire, where the Greeks themselves had to pay a tax of 10 percent on their own transactions. Thus began a hatred for Venice among the Greek population which persists down to the present day.

In the sixteenth century, Venetian strategic doctrine was to play the Ottoman Turks against the Spanish and Austrian Hapsburgs, and then to correct any residual strategic imbalance by playing the Hapsburgs off in their turn against the French. Sometimes Venice attempted to play the Portuguese rival power off against the Dutch. Later this was expanded to include playing the Dutch against the English, and the English against the French.

The Venetians also goaded forces out of the East to attack Christendom. Venice was the manipulator of Saracens, Mongols, and Turks, and got along with the slave-trading factions in each of these groups about as well as a power like Venice could get along with anybody. In particular, the Venetians were more willing to see territory - excepting Venetian territory - be occupied by the Turks than any other power. Venice was thus the past master of the more exotic permutations of the stolid old British *dividi et impera*, "divide and conquer."

But the essence of their strategic doctrine was something more abstruse, something sometimes described as the "collapse of empires" scenario. Venice parasitized the decline of much larger states, a decline that Venice itself strove to organize, sometimes in a long and gradual descending curve, but sometimes in a quick bonanza of looting.

Venice was repeatedly confronted with the problem posed by a triumphant enemy, at the height of his power, who would be perfectly capable of crushing the Serenissima in short order. This enemy had to be manipulated into self-destruction, not in any old way, but in the precise and specific way that served the Venetian interest. Does this sound impossible? What is astounding is how often it has succeeded. In fact, it is succeeding in a very real sense in the world today.

The most spectacular example of Venetian manipulation of the dumb giants of this world has gone down in history as the Fourth Crusade. At a tournament in the Champagne in 1201, the Duke of Champagne and numerous feudal barons collectively vowed to make a fighting pilgrimage to the sepulcher of Our Lord in Jerusalem. Here they were to reinforce a French garrison hard-pressed by the Turk Saladin. For many of them, this involved penance for certain misdeeds, not the least of which was a plot against their own sovereign liege, the king.

Reaching the Holy Land required transportation, and the French knights sent Geoffrey of Villehardouin to Venice to negotiate a convoy of merchant galleys with an appropriate escort of warships. Geoffrey closed the deal with the Doge Enrico Dandolo, blind and over eighty years old. Dandolo drove a hard bargain: for the convoy with escort to Jerusalem and back, the French knights would have to fork over the sum of 85,000 silver marks, equal to 20,000 kilograms of silver, or about double the yearly income of the King of England or of France at that time.

When 10,000 French knights and infantry gathered on the Lido of Venice in the summer of 1202, it was found that the French, after pawning everything down to the family silver, still owed the Venetians 35,000 marks. The cunning Dandolo proposed that this debt could easily be canceled if the crusaders would join the Venetians in subjugating Zara, a Christian city in Dalmatia, across the Adriatic from Venice. To this the knights readily agreed, and the feudal army forced the capitulation of Zara, which had been in revolt against Venice.

At this point Dandolo made the crusaders a "geopolitical" proposal, pointing out that the emperor of Byzantium was suspected of being in alliance with the Saracens, and that an advance to the Holy Land would be foolhardy unless this problem were first dealt with. As it happened, the Venetians were supporting a pretender to the Byzantine throne, since the current emperor was seeking to deny them their trading privileges. The pretender was the young Alexios, who promised the knights that if they helped him gain power, he would join them on the crusade with an army of 10,000 Greek soldiers.

Thus, from 1203 to 1204, Constantinople was besieged by the joint Franco-Venetian expeditionary force, which finally succeeded in breaking through the fortifications along the Golden Horn, the bay on the north side of the city.

Byzantium was sacked in an orgy of violence and destruction, from which the Venetians brought back as booty the four bronze horses which generally stand on the Basilica of St. Mark, but which are often exhibited in other cities. Count Baudoin of Flanders was place on the throne of a new concoction titled the Latin Empire of Constantinople. The doge of Venice received a piece of the action in the form of the title Lord of Three Eighths of the Latin Empire. Venice took over three-eighths of Constantinople, a permanent Venetian colony with its own battle fleet. Lemnos and Gallipoli came into Venetian hands. Crete was annexed, and were Naxos and related islands, and the large island of Euboa, which the Venetians called Negroponte. On the Ionian side, the Venetians appropriated Modon and Koron and several islands up to and including Corfu. All Venetian trading privileges in Greece were restored.

The loot brought back from the sack of Constantinople was greater than anything Europe would see until the Spanish treasure fleets from the New World several centuries later. Venice had acquired a colonial empire of naval bases, and was hegemonic in the eastern Mediterranean. To top it all off, the sultan of Egypt had paid a substantial bribe to Dandolo to keep the Crusaders out of Palestine in the first place.

For the human race, the Fourth Crusade was an unmitigated tragedy. The hypertrophy of Venetian power in the Mediterranean was one of the decisive factors ensuring the later defeat of Emperor Federigo II of Hohenstaufen, King of Sicily. The Venetian puppet "Latin Empire" was overthrown by the Paleologues in 1261, but by that time Federigo was gone. By 1266-68, Federigo's two sons and their Ghibelline supporters were defeated by Charles of Anjou, and the last representative of the Hohenstaufen dynasty was beheaded in the public square of Naples. The triumph of the Black Guelphs had become irreversible.

A further contributing factor in this tragedy was doubtless the Mongol hordes. At about the time the Venetians were sacking Constantinople, Ghengis Khan ruled over an empire that extended from Korea all the way to Iran, and which was rapidly advancing to the West. Batu, a nephew of Ghengis, defeated the Bulgarians in 1236, captured Kiev in the Ukraine in 1240, and swept into Poland. In Silesia in 1241 the German and Polish feudal army, including the Teutonic Knights, was annihilated. Later in the same year the Mongols defeated the Hungarians. The Mongols did not, for reasons that are not clear, advance further westward, but the Mongol Golden Horde that imposed its hegemony over Russia was the beginning of Russia's economic and cultural backwardness. For some loosening of the Mongol yoke, the Russians would have to fight the titanic battle of Kulokovo Field on the Don in 1380.

In these Mongol victories, there was something more than mere numerical superiority at work. as one historian sums up the case:

The Mongols did not sweep in wildly and suddenly, like reckless barbarians. No indeed, they advanced according to careful plan. At every stage, the Mongol generals informed themselves ahead of time about the state of European courts, and learned what feuds and disorders would be advantageous to their conquests. This valuable knowledge they obtained from Venetian merchants, men like Marco Polo's father. It was thus not without reason that Polo himself was made welcome at the court of Kublai, and became for a time administrator of the Great Khan.

So the great Marco Polo, and the Venetian family from which he came, was responsible for directing the destruction of Ghengis Khan against Europe. The omnipresent Venetian intelligence was also a factor in the Mongol destruction of the Arab cultural center of Baghdad in 1258.

Friedrich Schiller and William Shakespeare both analyze the manipulative methods employed by the Venetian secret intelligence establishment; both considered Venetian intelligence one of their most formidable enemies. Much of Schiller's writing is dedicated in various ways to fighting the Venice- Genoa- Geneva combination that had held the financial reins of King Philip II of Spain.

Schiller's direct treatment of Venice is a fragment of a novel titled *Der Geisterseher* ("The Ghost Seer"). Its central character is a Sicilian charlatan, expert at bringing the spirits of the departed back into the world for the thrill-seeking nobility at seances. This Sicilian charlatan is a figure for a whole class of Venetian intelligence operatives, like Count Cagliostro, the mountebank who claimed to be the reincarnation of the leading Mason of ancient Egypt. Another of this breed was Emanuel Swedenborg. After Schiller's time, this category swelled considerably with theosophists like Madame Blavatsky, Annie Besant, Henry Steel Olcott, and with that archapparitionist Rudolph Steiner, founder of the Anthroposophy movement and the Waldorf schools.

In Schiller's tale, a young German prince in Venice for the grand tour is subjected to a series of manipulations by a sinister, masked Armenian, who informs him, before the fact, of the death of a close relative hundreds of miles away. At a gambling den, a young Venetian patrician picks a quarrel with the prince, who fears for his life until he is ushered into one of the chambers of the Council of Ten, where the offending patrician is strangled before his eyes. He comes into contact with the Sicilian mountebank, and then spends weeks attempting to ascertain the identity of a mysterious beauty he has seen at church.

He begins to frequent a semi-secret free-thinking club, called the *Bucentoro* after the golden ship used by the doge on occasions of state. At least one cardinal is also a member of the Bucentoro. He takes to gambling, loses heavily, and contracts immense debts. In the meantime, rumors are spread at his Protestant court that he has become a Catholic, which leads to his repudiation by his entire family. At the end of the fragment, his life has been ruined, and his death is imminent.

Shakespeare's "Othello, The Moor of Venice" is a more finished analysis of the same technique. It was written and performed shortly after 1603, when the Venetians and Genoese had acquired vast powers in England through the accession of their puppet James I to the throne.

Othello is a Moor, hired out to Venice as a mercenary, and at the apex of his power, having just won a victory over the Turkish fleet attacking Cyprus. He enjoys the full confidence of the Senate, and has just married Desdemona, the daughter of a patrician. Othello, the "erring barbarian," is however something of a dumb giant: his proficiency in the arts of war is unmatched, but his emotional makeup tends decidedly toward the naive and infantile. He has no real insight into affairs of state, or into psychology. Above all, he is superstitious and has a propensity for jealousy.

All of these weaknesses are systematically exploited by "honest Iago," a member of Othello's staff who is determined to destroy him. Iago is the figure of the Venetian intelligence officer, an expert in what he calls "double knavery" - the art of manipulation. He sets out to destroy Othello using an accurate psychological profile of the Moor, and exploiting above all Othello's naive willingness to trust his "honest Iago." Iago's modus operandi is to:

Make the Moor thank me, love me, and reward me,
For making him egregiously an ass
And practicing upon his peace and quit
Even to madness.

Iago uses his throwaway agent, the dupe Roderigo, for financing and services. He sets up scenes where he cons one participant with one story, briefs another participant with a different story, brings them together in a controlled environment, and exploits the resulting fireworks for his overall strategy. He sets up a fight between Roderigo and the drunken Cassio that leads to the wounding of Montano by Cassio, who is ousted as chief lieutenant by Othello. After this, he manipulates Desdemona's naive desire to help Cassio regain his post into prima facie evidence that Desdemona is an adulteress. Iago is then able to goad Othello all the way to killing Desdemona and, finally, himself.

At the center of the play are epistemological questions of truth and proof. In Act 3, Iago drives Othello wild with innuendoes about Desdemona's alleged adultery, and makes him commit to the murder of Cassio, all without the slightest shred of proof. What Othello then regards as definitive proof of adultery, sufficient to motivate the murder of Desdemona, is a handkerchief which Iago obtains and plants on Cassio. This handkerchief is an object of deep emotional and superstitious importance for Othello, as it had been given by his father to his mother. It had been his first love token for Desdemona. When he sees it in the hands of Cassio, he is ready to kill.

Iago is well aware of Othello's epistemological weakness. When he first obtains the handkerchief, he gloats:

I will in Cassio's lodging lose this napkin,
And let him find it. Trifles light as air
Are to the jealous confirmations strong
As proofs of holy writ; this may do something.

Shortly thereafter, Othello demands certainty that Desdemona is betraying him. What would be definitive proof, Iago asks?

Would you, the supervisor, grossly gape upon -
Behold her tupp'd?

This kind of certainty, he says, is impossible to obtain, but he offers an inductive- deductive substitute:

But yet, I say,
If imputation and strong circumstances,
Which lead directly to the door of truth,
Will give you satisfaction, you might have't.

In the final scene, we can agree with Iago's wife Emilia that Othello is a gull and a dolt, a "murderous coxcomb ... as ignorant as dirt." But the lesson is that not only Othello, but all those who love not wisely but too well, who, "being wrought" and "perplexed in the extreme," are potential victims of Venetian intelligence.

**DESTRUCTION OF THE RENAISSANCE**

Since the Venetian oligarchy relied for its survival on the secret weapon of political intelligence manipulation, its primary strategic targets were first and foremost dictated by epistemological rather than military criteria. Fleets and armies, even in the hands of a powerful and aggressive enemy state, could well redound to Venetian advantage. The real danger was a hostile power that developed epistemological defenses against manipulation and deceit. In the face of such a threat Venice did - and does - kill.

The Italian Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, perhaps the greatest outpouring of human creativity in history, represented such a threat to the Serene Republic, and in a more concentrated form than it had ever faced before. The threat arose from the epistemological warfare and alliance system of the great Cosimo de' Medici of Florence and his successors. Venice mobilized every resource at its disposal to destroy the Renaissance. After decades of sabotage, going so far as to arrange the ravaging of Italy by foreign armies, Venice succeeded.

The potential political and epistemological power of the Italian Renaissance are best identified in the ecumenical council of the Church convened in Florence in the year 1438. The council, first convened in Ferrara, was moved to Florence at the urging of Cosimo de' Medici, who held power from 1434 to 1464. Cosimo was the major financial and political sponsor of the proceedings.

Cosimo was a self-declared enemy of Venice. On one occasion he wrote, "Association with the Venetians brings two things which have always been rejected by men of wisdom: certain perdition and disgrace."

The council had to deal with the ongoing crisis in the western church, which had been exacerbated by the struggle between the Council of Basel and Pope Eugene IV, who had been driven out of Rome by a revolt. In the East, the Ottoman Turks were beginning to recover from the crushing defeat that the Turkish Emperor Bajazet had suffered in 1402 at the battle of Ankara at the hand of Tamerlane the Great. The first, unsuccessful, Turkish siege of Constantinople had already been mounted in 1422.

The hope held out by the Council of Florence was to implement Nicolas of Cusa's program of the *Concordantia Catholica* - a community of principle among humanist sovereign states for cultural and economic development, against Venetians, Turks, and all enemies of natural law. To Florence came the Emperor of Byzantium, John VIII Paleologue, accompanied by his advisor Gemisthos Plethon and Plethon's student, Archbishop Bessarion of Nicea. The Latin delegation was titularly headed by Pope Eugene IV, heavily dependent upon the support of Cosimo de' Medici at that time. This delegation was dominated in outlook by men like Nicolas of Cusa, Leon Battista Alberti, Leonardo Bruni, Cardinal Capranica, and Aeneas Piccolomini of Siena, later Pope Pius II. The Greek and Latin delegations were each profoundly vitiated by powerful Aristotelian factions, but this was still one of the most impressive assemblies in history.

The culmination of the council was an impassioned oration by Plethon on the antithesis between Plato and Aristotle, a speech which went far beyond anything ever heard in the West. Marsilio Ficino, himself a participant at the council, tells the story of how Cosimo de' Medici, while listening to Plethon, made up his mind to create the Platonic Academy in Florence.

The most immediate question to be addressed was the reunification of the Roman and Greek churches, abrogating the mutual excommunications issued by the pope and the patriarch of Constantinople in 1054. The contending theologians debated the question of the "filioque" in the Latin credo, attempting to resolve the question of whether the Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father, as the Greeks argued, or from the Son as well, according to the Roman view. The Greeks eventually agreed to recognize the correctness of the Latin position, although they declined to modify their own credo accordingly. The Paleologue emperor intervened repeatedly in these discussions, stressing that there were no real differences in doctrine, and that anyone who let nonexistent divergences stand in the way of common action against the Turks was a worse traitor than Judas. In the end a purely formal reunification of the two churches was attained, but it remained a dead letter.

Even so, Cosimo and his cothinkers came close several times to welding an alliance capable of dominating the world, and the first to pay the price of their success would have been the Venetians. Medici Florence was at the center of a network of trade and finance that was beginning to rival Venice, with the crucial difference that the Florentines were the producers, thanks to Cosimo's dirigism, of the textile products they offered for sale. The Duchy of Milan would shortly come under the domination of the *condottiero* (mercenary commander) Francesco Sforza, installed in power with the help of the Medici, and an enemy of Venice. In 1461 the humanist Louis XI would take the throne of France. This new king was determined to apply the concepts of statecraft developed in Italy, and considered the Venetians "insolent merchants." In 1460, the humanist Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini would be elected Pope Pius II; in the meantime he was in a position to influence Frederick III of Hapsburg, the Holy Roman Emperor.

The Venetian reaction to this potential for the implementation of an ecumenical Grand Design on the platform of the Italian Renaissance humanists was, predictably, to bring on the Turks once again. During all these years the Turks possessed a combined warehouse- residence- safehouse in Venice, the Fondaco dei Turchi, which facilitated dealings between the doge and the sultan. Spurred on by Venetian financing and Venetian- procured artillery, the Sultan Mohammed the Conqueror laid siege to Constantinople and captured it in 1453. The Turks were aided by the Greek patriarch, who had pronounced the defense of the Paleologue dynasty a heretical cause. Finally, it was the Genoese troops who opened the gates of the city to the forces of the sultan. Hardly a coincidence was the burning of the library of Constantinople with its matchless collection of Ionian and Platonic codices, most unavailable anywhere else since the library of Alexandria had been destroyed some fifteen centuries earlier. In their own sack of Constantinople in 1204, the Venetians had declined to appropriate these manuscripts.

The destruction of Byzantium by the Turks gave the Venetians a slogan with which to organize their war against the Renaissance. Since the Roman Empire had finally ended, it was left to the Venetians to arrogate to themselves the task of building a new Roman Empire. The foundation of a new Roman Empire became, in Venice, from the middle of the fifteenth century on, the leading obsession of the oligarchs.

"The Venetians are called new Romans," confided the patrician Bernardo Bembo to his diary. Francesco Sforza of Milan wrote that the Venetians were:

"obstinate and hardened, always keeping their mouths open to be able to bite off power and usurp the state of all their neighbors to fulfill the appetite of their souls to conquer Italy and then beyond, as did the Romans, thinking to compare themselves to the Romans when their power was at its apex."

Machiavelli wrote that the Venetians had "fixed in their souls the intention of creating a monarchy on the Roman model." This is corroborated by a dispatch of the ambassador of Louis XII of France at the court of the Emperor Maximilian I some years later, which described the Venetians as:

"traders in human blood, traitors to the Christian faith who have tacitly divided up the world with the Turks, and who are already planning to throw bridgeheads across the Danube, the Rhine, the Seine, and Tagus, and the Ebro, attempting to reduce Europe to a province and to keep it subjugated to their armies."

These megalomaniac plans of the Venetians were no secret. In 1423, the Doge Tommaso Mocenigo had urged upon his fellow oligarchs a policy of expansionism which would make them the overlords "of all the gold and of Christendom."

The most penetrating indictments of the Venetians during this period were issued by Pope Pius II Piccolomino, who tried in vain to force Venice into joining a crusade against the Turks. A Venetian saying of this period was *Prima son Vinizian, poi son Cristian.* (I am a Venetian first, then a Christian.") In his *Commentaries*, Pius II excoriates the Venetians for their duplicitous treachery, and establishes the fact that they are a pagan, totalitarian state. The Venetians, he says, have acted in their diplomacy:

"with the good faith characteristics of barbarians, or after the manner of traders whose nature it is to weigh everything by utility, paying no attention to honor. But what do fish care about law? As among the brute beasts aquatic creatures have the least intelligence, so among human beings the Venetians are the least just and the least capable of humanity, and naturally so, for they live on the sea and pass their lives in the water; they use ships instead of horses; they are not so much companions of men as of fish and comrades of marine monsters. They please only themselves, and while they talk they listen to and admire themselves.... They are hypocrites. They wish to appear as Christians before the world, but in reality they never think of God and, except for the state, which they regard as a deity, they hold nothing sacred, nothing holy. To a Venetian, that is just which is for the good of the state; that is pious which increases the empire.... What the senate approves is holy even though it is opposed to the gospel.... They are allowed to do anything that will bring them to supreme power. All law and right may be violated for the sake of power."

During many of these years Venetians were in a tacit alliance with the Turks. When, for example, a revolt against Venetian rule in Albania was started, threatening the Venetian naval base at Durazzo, the Venetians made a deal with the Turks to crush the revolt. On one occasion Pius II received the Venetian ambassador to the Roman court and condemned Venetian policy with these words:

"Your cause is one with thieves and robbers.... No power was ever greater than the Roman empire and yet God overthrew it because it was impious, and He put in its place the priesthood because it respected divine law.... You think [your] republic will last forever. It will not last long. Your population so wickedly gathered together will soon be scattered abroad. The offscourings of fishermen will be exterminated. A mad state cannot long stand."

In 1464 Pius II, despite a serious illness, traveled from Rome to Ancona to personally lead a crusade against the Turks. He wished to force the hand of the Venetians, who had promised him a battle fleet. He died shortly after the Venetian warships arrived, and Venice thereupon pulled out of any serious fighting against the Turks. But his attack on "the mad state" was on target, then and now.

During the first half of the fifteenth century, much Venetian energy was devoted to a rapid expansion up the Po Valley toward Milan. They seized Padua, Vicenza, Verona, Brescia, and Bergamo, reaching the Adda River, just a few miles from Milan. With Milan under Venetian control, the "new Romans" could bid fair to dominate northern Italy and then the entire peninsula.

Cosimo de' Medici, as we have seen, secured a Florence-Milan alliance by supporting the claims of Francesco Sforza, fighting a was against Venice to do it. Basing himself on this Florence-Milan axis, Cosimo then proceeded to create an uneasy peace in Italy that was to last forty years. This was the Italian League, formed at the Peace of Lodi in 1453, which united the leading powers of Italy, the pope, Naples, Milan, Florence, and Venice, ostensibly in an alliance against the Turks, who had for a time held a toe-hold in Apulia. In reality, the Italian League was a Florence- Milan- Naples combination designed to check Venetian expansionism. In this it proved effective, giving the Renaissance almost half a century of time to develop under the *longa pax* of the Medici.

During these years, stymied in Italy, the Venetians concentrated on overseas expansion, including the conquest of Cyprus. But on the death of Cosimo's successor, Lorenzo the Magnificent, they began their systematic campaign to destroy the civilization of the high renaissance. Their basic premise was that, given their own inability to devastate the centers of Renaissance culture and economic development, they must concentrate on duping the overwhelming military forces of European states like France, Spain, and the other Hapsburg dominions into accomplishing this task for them.

The most competent contemporary observer of these matters was Niccolo Machiavelli, active somewhat later in the post-Medici Florentine diplomatic service, and a factional ally of Cesare Borgia, Duke of Valentino. Machiavelli noted that the two most dangerous forces in Italy around the turn of the century were the Venetians and the pope. His own hatred was directed especially against Venice, firstly because of the stated Venetian intention to subjugate Italy in a new Roman Empire. Secondly, Venice more than any other state relied on armies of mercenaries, and thus embodied precisely that practice which Machiavelli knew had to be extirpated, in favor of citizen-soldiers, if Italy was to be saved from humiliating subjugation to the likes of the Hapsburgs.

Machiavelli pointed out that the disintegration of Italy began when the Venetians succeeded in turning Lodovico il Moro, successor of Francesco as Duke of Milan, making him their agent of influence. Lodovico was responsible for the first major invasion of Italy in many years when he agreed to support the claims of Charles VIII of France to the Kingdom of Naples. This was the French king whom his father, the great Louis XI, considered a hopeless imbecile. In 1494 the French army crossed the Alps, accompanied by a Genoese advisor we will meet again later: Giuliano della Rovere.

This was enough to bring about the fall of the Medici regime in Florence, to the advantage of the Pazzi, Albizi, and related oligarchs of that city. These oligarchs immediately sought to crush the Florentine Renaissance using the regime of the demented Dominican monk Girolamo Savonarola, who set up a theocracy a la Khomeini. Savonarola proudly trumpeted that his rule was based on sound Venetian principles; his family was closely related to the Padua Aristotelian community. As for Charles VIII, he went on to establish a tenuous hold on Naples.

Several years later, in 1498, the Venetians repeated this maneuver, with the variation that this time it was *they* who blatantly invited the French to cross the Alps. This time the pretext was the French claim to the Milanese dukedom, and the dupe was a new French king, Louis XII. The French army knocked out Milan in 1500, a fatal blow to the Renaissance cultural ferment associated there with Leonardo da Vinci. Shortly thereafter, Louis XII decided to compensate the Hapsburgs with Naples. Naples accordingly became the first beachhead of what would shortly become a totally destructive Hapsburg hegemony in Italy.

**VENICE AND GENOA COMBINE**

For Venice, so far so good: Florence, Naples, and Milan had been ruined. But ironically, the same dumb Valois and Hapsburg giants which had taken out three dangerous rivals were now to turn like Frankenstein's monsters on the wily new Romans. Venetian manipulations were about to boomerang in the form of an alliance of all of Europe against Venice.

This was the famous crisis of the War of the League of Cambrai, which was assembled in 1508-1509. The opposing coalition was made up of the pope (by then the Genoese Giuliano della Rovere, as Julius II), the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I, France, Spain, Savoy, Mantua, and Ferrara. The announced purpose of this alliance was to expunge Venice from the face of the earth.

It nearly worked. At Agnadello, near the Adda River, the Venetian mercenary army was crushed by an army composed predominantly of Frenchmen. The Venetians were driven all the way down the Po Valley to Padua, and they soon lost that as well. Machiavelli exulted that on the day of Agnadello, the Venetians lost everything that they had conquered in more than 800 years. Machiavelli was himself engaged in operations against Venice, bringing a grant of Florentine cash to the aid of the Franco-Imperial forces holding Verona.

With nothing left but the lagoons, the Venetian position was desperate. The doge sent a message to the pope asking for mercy, and announcing that Venice would vacate territory taken in the past from the Papal States.

Inside Venice, Agnadello brought on an orgy of hysterical self-flagellation among the terrified patricians. The banker Girolamo Priuli wrote in his diary that Agnadello had been a punishment for the sins of the Venetian nobility, among which he numbered arrogance, violation of promises, lechery in nunneries, sodomy, effeminate dress, and luxurious and lascivious entertainments. Antonio Contarini, newly appointed patriarch of Venice, gave a speech to the Senate in which he characterized the Serenissima as a thoroughly amoral city. The defeat was a punishment for the city's sins, he said. Nunneries were catering to the sexual needs of the rich and powerful. Homosexuality was so widespread that female prostitutes had complained to him that they had earned so little during their youth that they had to keep working far into their old age.

But more significantly, the shock of Agnadello set into motion a strategic review in the Venetian intelligence community which led to very far-reaching conclusions, some of which were not obvious before several decades had gone by.

The first Venetian ploy was to attempt to dismember the Cambrai coalition. They started with Pope Julius II. This pontiff was, as already noted, Genoese. Genoa and Venice had engaged in a series of highly destructive wars up till about the end of the fourteenth century, but after that, Genoa gravitated toward the status of junior partner and close associate of the Venetians. The Venetians had bested the Genoese by virtue of superior connections in the East, but otherwise their was a broad area of agreement.

The symbol of Genoa was St. George the dragon-slayer, in reality no saint at all but a thinly disguised version of Perseus saving Andromeda by slaying the sea monster, a legend that is centered on the coast of Lebanon. The "George" is said to come from the Gorgon Medusa, whose head Perseus was carrying.

Perseus is in turn nothing but a westernized variant of Marduk, the Syrian Apollo, a deity associated with the most evil forces of ancient Assyria and Babylon. The Venetians had their own Marduk cult, although subordinated to St. Mark, on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, home of a Dominican monastery and today of the Cini Foundation, one of the highest level think tanks in the world. The modern British preference of Gorgons is too well known to need comment.

What probably accounted more directly for Julius II's decision to reverse his alliances was a deal mediated with the Venetians by Agostino Chigi, the Siena Black Guelph banker from whose financial empire the infamous Siena Group of today derives. He proposed that the Venetians stop buying alum, needed in textile and glass manufacture, from the Turks, but contract for a large shipment at higher prices from the alum mines at Tolfa in the Papal States - mines for which he, Chigi, was acting as agent. To sweeten the pot, Chigi offered the Venetians tens of thousands of ducats in much-needed loans.

The Venetians, fearing a rapid French offensive, accepted. Their own state finances were in total shambles. Only the Chigi loan allowed them to hire enough Swiss mercenaries to hold out against the French and the Imperial *Landsknechte*.

To provide a plausible cover for his move, Julius II suddenly discovered that the real issue was not Venice after all, but the need to expel the barbarians (primarily the French) from Italy. Julius stipulated an alliance with Venice. He then set up the slogan of *Fuori Barbari!* (Kick the Barbarians out!) which is still recorded by credulous writers of Italian school books as the beginning of the struggle to unify Italy. Even the Venetian mercenaries, mostly Swiss, began using the battle cry of "Italy and Freedom!"

Thus the post-Agnadello crisis was overcome. Some years later the Venetians tried the same tactic in reverse, this time with more lasting success. By 1525 the prevalent barbarians in Italy were the forces of Emperor Charles V, who had defeated the French at Pavia, capturing King Francis I. The French lost their hold on Naples and Milan. At this point Doge Andrea Gritti, whose portrait by Tiziano speaks volumes about his personality, decided to agitate once again the banner of Italian freedom. This took the form of the Holy League of Cognac "for the restoration of Italian liberty," uniting France, Venice, Milan, Florence, and the Papal States under Pope Clement VIII Medici. After having set up this alliance, designed to play the French against Charles V once again to destroy Medici-controlled Rome, the last intact Renaissance center, the Venetians retired into defensive positions to await the outcome.

Venetian capacities to manipulate Charles V were formidable indeed. The emperor's bankers and intelligencers were the Fuggers of Augsburg, a banking house and a city that must be regarded as Venetian satellites, within a context of very heavy Venetian control of the cities of the Danube valley. Virtually every young male member of the Fugger family, and of their colleagues the Welsers as well, was sent to Venice for a period of apprenticeship at the Fondaco dei Tedeschi. This was the case with Jacob Fugger the Rich. Venice was the pivot for Fugger metals trading, especially toward the East.

Thus, the Venetians stayed in their phony war posture against Charles V, while the imperial army of Lutheran *Lanzi* under Georg Frundsberg devastated Italy. The sack of Rome in 1527 was the direct outcome of this combined Venetian diplomacy and manipulation. To make Charles V's triumph complete, the Genoese Admiral Andrea Doria, commanding the French fleet, defected to the imperial side. A Doria coup in Genoa then established a permanent de facto alliance with Venice.

In 1530, Charles V was crowned as Holy Roman Emperor and King of Italy in a ceremony at Bologna. Garrisons of imperial troops were shortly stationed in every major city. Thanks to the tenacious policy of the Venetians, the main centers of the Renaissance had been subverted or destroyed. Venice was the only major Italian state which had retained real sovereignty. With the end of the Renaissance, Venice could feel free to start a delphic Renaissance among the throngs of intellectuals seeking asylum in the lagoons.

**THE CREATION OF THE JESUITS**

The "long autumn of the Italian Renaissance in Venice" during the rest of the sixteenth century was only one deployment among several. Another was the promotion of the Protestant Reformation. The more immediate controllers of Martin Luther have yet to be identified, but this is something of a secondary matter. Luther's agitation in Wittenberg was merely one more example of protests against the papacy and the Curia that had been chronic and endemic for decades. What gave Luther and the rest of the Protestant reformers real clout was a publicity and diffusion of their ideas that owed much to the Venetian publishing establishment. The Venetian presses quickly turned out 40,000 copies of the writings of Luther, Calvin, Melancthon, and the heresiarch Juan Valdes, especially popular in Italy.

Pope Leo X publicly denounced the University of Padua as the hotbed of inspiration of the German disease of Lutheranism. Clearly, Venetian interest was well-served by a schismatic movement that would embroil Germany, France, and the rest of Europe in a series of easily profiled conflicts. In addition, a conflict between reformers and counter- reformers, all owing allegiance to Aristotle, would severely undercut the influence of Erasmus and others like him.

Venetian influence on both Reformation and Counter- Reformation can be seen most clearly in the remarkable career of Gasparo Contarini, who did not let the fact that he was a Protestant in theology, well before Luther, prevent him from founding the Society of Jesus.

Contarini was the scion of one of Venice's most prestigious LONGHI families. The Contarinis had produced seven doges, and Gasparo had his sights set on being the eighth, before he was tapped to serve Venice as a member of the College of Cardinals. He served the Serene Republic as ambassador to the court of Charles V, and as ambassador to the Vatican, where he took a role in setting up the Medici Pope Clement VII for the 1527 sack of Rome. Toward the end of his life, Contarini was sent as papal legate to the Imperial Diet at Regenburg, where he represented the Roman point of view in debates with schismatics like Melancthon. There, he had a hand in destroying any compromise between the Lutherans and the Emperor Charles, which would have helped to end the bloodshed and dissension of the Reformation years.

What does this sublime Venetian patrician have to do with the founding of the Jesuit order by that itinerant and deranged mystic, Ignatius of Loyola? Ignatius was the creature of Venice, and of Contarini in particular.

In 1521, Ignatius was wounded while fighting the French in one of the wars of Charles V. During his convalescence, he underwent his much-touted mystical crisis, after which he took up the life of a hobo. Making his way around Europe seeking funding for a pilgrimage to the holy land, Ignatius found his way to Venice, where he camped out in St. Mark's Square and lived by begging.

One evening the Venetian oligarch Marcantonio Trevisan was sleeping in his golden palace, and had a vision. An angel came to him asking, "Why are you sleeping so soundly in your warm bed, while in the square there is a holy man, a poor pilgrim who needs your help?" Trevisan rushed downstairs to find Ignatius, who became his house guest, fleas and all.

After that, Ignatius was given an audience with the doge, Andrea Gritti, who offered him passage to Cyprus on a Venetian warship as first leg of his pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Ignatius continued his travels, but soon returned to Venice to develop relationships with other members of the oligarchy. These included Gasparo Contarini's nephew Pietro, who became a recipient of Ignatius' patented brainwashing treatment, the *Exercitationes Spirituales*.

Then Ignatius made his way to Rome. Here he became the protégé of Gasparo Contarini, who had been appointed to the College of Cardinals by Pope Paul III Farnese. The cardinal took the *Exercitationes Spirituales*, and appointed Ignatius his personal confessor and spiritual advisor. By 1540, Contarini had personally interceded with the pope against Ignatius' enemies within the church hierarchy to ensure the founding of the Society of Jesus as a new Church order. In June 1539, Contarini personally traveled to the pope's summer residence at Tivoli, and prevailed on the pontiff to let him read aloud the statutes of the new order composed by Ignatius. The pope must have been favorably impressed by something. His approving comment *Hic est digitus Dei*, ("Here is the finger of God"), has become a feature of the turgid Jesuit homiletics.

**BIRTH OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT**

An ironic postscript to this story is that later the Venetian oligarchy decided that it simply would not do to be too closely identified with the benighted excesses of the Spanish and the papacy they so thoroughly dominated. In the years around 1570, accordingly, Venice became the site of the first example in Europe of what the French later termed "salons" for socializing and literary discussion: the Ridotto Morosini, sponsored by the ancient family of the same name. Here the seeds were sown that would later produce free-thinking, *l'esprit libertin* and the *Philosophes* - in a word, the Enlightenment. The Ridotto Morosini salon was in favor of tolerance and science, against everything doctrinaire and narrow. They sheltered Galileo against the Inquisition. Out of the Morosini salon came one of the rare public factions in Venetian political history, the so-called Giovani.

The Giovani, in contrast to their rivals, the Vecchi, were in favor of profound innovations in Venetian foreign policy. They wished above all to cement alliances with the countries to whom they felt the future belonged: France, England, and the Netherlands. The Vecchi, they said, were paralyzed by too much fear of Spanish power, and not ready enough to tangle with the people.

The Giovani were able to implement their program in 1606, when the Pope (now Paul V, Camillo Borghese) strenuously objected to the arrest by Venice of several ecclesiastics in its territory. The Borghese pope placed Venice under the interdict, and proceeded to excommunicate government officials. The main supporter of Venice internationally was James I, the Stuart ruler of England.

At the same time, the powerful Venetian propaganda apparatus swung into action, under the leadership of a Servite monk named Paolo Sarpi, whose lack of noble birth kept him from public office. Sarpi was the Venetian contact man for Sir Francis Bacon.

Sarpi had been in Rome, where he had been associated with Nicholas Bobadilla, one of St. Ignatius' original hard core. He had been a friend of Bellarmino, later the Jesuit-general, and his direct adversary during the Interdict affair. He was close to Galileo, who called him "my father." Sarpi had lent a hand in the construction of Galileo's telescope. Sarpi was lavish in his praise of Gilbert's treatise on magnetism. He was also the author of an *Arte di Ben Pensare*, which is curiously similar to the writings of John Locke. Sarpi admitted in private to being "a Protestant."

He engaged in a long pamphlet war with Bellarmino, and topped this off with a muck-raking *History of the Council of Trent*, which needless to say whitewashed the role of Venetian intelligence in the Counter- Reformation. The noise created around the whole affair was so great that some people forgot that it had after all been the Venetians, specifically Zuane Mocenigo, who had consigned Giordano Bruno - also of Ridotto Morosini - into the hands of the Inquisition just a few years before.

**METASTASIS**

The policies of the Giovani, propagandized by Sarpi and Doge Leonardo Dona' during the struggle around the Interdict, corresponded to a metastasis of Venice's power and influence through the world. The Venetians and their Genoese Doria-faction associates were busily shifting their family fortunes into more profitable locations, not tied to the fate of what was rapidly becoming a third-rate naval power.

The Venice-Genoa partnership is in evidence first of all in the banking side of the Spanish looting of the New World. Venice got control of the silver coming from the Americas, shifting to a silver standard from the previous gold standard in the middle of the sixteenth century. This silver was used to pay for the spices and other products from the East.

Venice was extremely liquid at this time, with about 14 million ducats in coins in reserve around 1600. At about the same time, incredibly, the Venetian regime had completed the process of paying off its entire public debt, leaving the state with no outstanding obligations of any type. This overall highly liquid situation is a sure sign that flights of capital are underway, in the direction of the countries singled out by the Giovani as future partners or victims: France, England, and the Netherlands.

The Genoese around the St. George's Bank received virtually the entire world's circulating gold stocks. The two cities teamed up starting around 1579 at the Piacenza Fair, a prototype of a clearing house for European banks, which soon had a turnover of 20 million ducats a year. This fair was a precursor of the post-Versailles Bank for International Settlements.

In 1603, Venice and Genoa assumed direction of the finances of Stuart England, and imparted their characteristic method to the British East India Company. It is also this tandem that was present at the creation of the great Amsterdam Bank, the financial hinge of the seventeenth century, and of the Dutch East India Company. Venice and Genoa were also the midwives for the great financial power growing up in Geneva, which specialized in controlling the French public debt and in fostering the delphic spirits of the Enlightenment.

The Venetians, in cooperation with the restored - that is, degenerated - Medici interests, began a major move into maritime and other types of insurance. These ventures live on today in the biggest business enterprise associated with Venice, the Assicurazioni Generali Venezia, one of the biggest if not *the* biggest insurance and real estate holdings in the world.

On May 12, 1797, the Gran Consiglio obeyed Napoleon's ultimatum and voted itself out of existence. Four thousand French infantrymen paraded on St. Mark's Square, where foreign troops had never before in history been seen. The golden Bucentoro was burned and the gold carted off. The Venetian "Republic" was finished, but it continued most emphatically to exist in less visible but highly effective forms.

One particular of the last years of Venice is of special interest to us: During the American Revolution about 3000 Venetian naval personnel, corresponding to about one-third of the total available strength, were serving with the British Royal Navy.

Commenting on the liquidation of Venice, the great Neapolitan Neoplatonic Giuseppe Cuoco wrote:

"I don't know what will happen to Italy, but the fulfillment of the Florentine secretary's prophecy in the destruction of the old, imbecilic Venetian oligarchy will be a great boon for Italy always."

The reference, of course, is to Machiavelli.

On the other side, William Wordsworth lamented the demise of "a maiden city," the "eldest child of liberty."

**POST MORTEM**

Unfortunately, all the obituaries were premature: Venice has continued to be very much alive. During the nineteenth century and up to our own time it has been the most important single incubator for fascist movements. With its military and financial power largely emigrated elsewhere, Venice's importance for political culture is now greater than ever.

Examples of this are inexhaustible. Richard Wagner wrote part of *Tristan und Isolde* while living in the Palazzo Giustinian on the Grand Canal. One story has it that the leitmotif of the *Liebestod* was inspired by the mournful call of a gondolier. At the end of his life Wagner moved to Palazzo Vendramin Callergi, where he died. This building, presently a gambling casino, was also the home of Count Coudenhove- Kalergi, the founder of the Pan-European Union. Friedrich Nietzsche loved Venice, returned there incessantly, and dedicated certain poems to the city which today can still be used in lieu of a powerful emetic. Venice was an inspiration for Lord Byron, for Thomas Mann, and so on.

Other examples abound of how the Venetian oligarchy's cultural and political influence has reached down into the modern era:

\* When British East India Company retainer Thomas Malthus published his *Essay on Population* he was plagiarizing from the Venetian Giammaria Ortes, who produced, around 1750, a fully developed version of the argument that geometric population growth outstrips the much slower arithmetric progress of food production.

\* John Ruskin, the leading ideologue of the British Dark Ages faction, began his career with a raving treatise on architecture, *The Stones of Venice* (1851). This volume popularized the notion that a "Venetian Gothic" style had been developed in the better times of the city's history (which for Ruskin ended in 1418) and it was used systematically to discredit the Golden Renaissance.

\* A turn-of-the-century new Roman Empire faction led by Venetian Count Volpi di Misurata, who was known as the doge of his era, sponsored the fascist Mussolini supporter Gabriele D'Annunzio to drum up enthusiasm for a new crusade into the Balkans and the East. Volpi became finance minister in Mussolini's cabinet, along with a very large number of other Venetians. D'Annunzio incited the Italians to take back Trieste, the rest of *Italia Irredenta*, and the Dardanelles, bringing on to center stage the so-called Parvus Plan for dismemberment of the Ottoman and Russian empires, which is generally recognized as the detonator of World War I. It is possible that the turn-of-the- century super spook Alexander Parvus was ultimately employed by Venice.

\* The Societe Europeenne de Culture, a think tank created in 1950 through the efforts of Venetian intelligence operative Umberto Campagnolo, has for the past three decades pulled intellectuals from both East and West into organizing for an "international culture," based on rejecting the existence of sovereign nations. The SEC counted among its members the cream of the postwar intelligencia: Adam Schaff of Poland, Bertolt Brecht of East Germany, Georg Lukas of Hungary, and Boris Paternak of the Soviet Union, as well as Stephen Spender and Arnold Toynbee, Benedetto Croce and Norberto Bobbio, Julian Huxley and Thomas Mann, Francois Mauriac, and Jean Cocteau. Later, the SEC launched the Third World national liberation ideology.

Today, the Club of Rome is the institution that represents the most concentrated essence of Venetian influence and the Venetian method. The Club of Rome wants to convince the great powers and peoples of the world to commit collective suicide by accepting the genocidal doctrine of zero growth. It also hopes to abolish the sovereign nation as a vehicle for economic growth and scientific progress.

Club of Rome founder Aurelio Peccei has just written a new book titled *One Hundred Pages For the Future*, a global review of the impact of the Club of Rome, and particularly since its 1972 release of the zero-growth model *Limits to Growth* was published, a series of social movements has sprung up under the sponsorship of the ideas in the book. These - the women's movement, the peace movement, Third World national liberation movements, gay rights, civil liberties, ecologists, consumer and minority rights, etc. - must now be welded together into one movement for a single strategic goal: the implementation of a zero-growth international order.

The Venetian problem remains with us today. Truly, the most urgent task of this generation of mankind is to definitively liquidate the horror that is Venice.

**END**

**THE ROLE OF THE VENETIAN OLIGARCHY IN REFORMATION, COUNTER - REFORMATION, ENLIGHTENMENT, AND THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR**

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During the last dozen years, our philosophical association has advanced the thesis that many of the disasters of modern history have been rooted in the heritage of the former Venetian Republic. This includes the central role of the Venetians in cutting short the Golden Renaissance of Italy, in precipitating the Protestant reformation and the wars of religion, and in creating the pseudo-scientific, irrationalist currents of thought that are called the Enlightenment. I would like to return to some of these themes today in order to explore them in greater detail.

Our interest in exposing the Venetian war against the Italian renaissance of the Quattrocento is coherent with our commitment to the Renaissance as an ideal, and with our efforts to launch a new Renaissance today. As has just been stressed, the benchmark for civilization, culture, religion and morality in the last half millennium is constituted by the work of Cardinal Nicolaus of Cusa, the founder of modern science, and of his associate Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, Pope Pius II. Through their cooperation with the best representatives of Medici Florence in the time of the Council of Florence of 1439, Nicolaus and Aeneas Silvius saved western civilization from the Dark Age that had begun with the defeat of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen at the hands of the Black Guelph oligarchs. During that Dark Age, the Roman Catholic Church had been substantially destroyed by the Avignon captivity and the Great Schism, both against the backdrop of such events as the Hundred Years' War, the Wars of the Roses, and the advance of the Ottoman Empire. Without Nicolaus and Aeneas Silvius, there would have been no Europe and no church by 1500; Venice opposed both through the Morosini agent Gregory von Heimburg [Gilbert, 191]. Paolo Morosini dedicated to Heimburg one of the landmark propaganda pieces on the Venetian oligarchical system to be published during the fifteenth century, "Concerning the affairs and structure of the Venetian Republic, dedicated to Gregory of Heimburg, the most eminent doctor of the Germans." Gregory was the thug and agent provocateur who attempted to sabotage the work of Pius II, Cusanus, and Bessarion, and who is thus a prominent and typical representative of the anti-papal, anti- imperial current among the electors and other princes (Fuersten) of the Holy Roman Empire. This was the stratum of oligarchs played by the Venetians during the conciliar movement, mobilized by Venice against Pius II's proposed crusade, and which would form the basis of Luther's support during the "Reformation."

The essence of Venice is oligarchism, usury, slavery, and the cult of Aristotle. The traditional rate of interest was above 20% - a Volcker prime rate. The Venetians were the first in western Europe to read Aristotle directly in the Greek text - first at the School of the Rialto, where leading patricians lectured on Aristotle, and later, after about 1400, at the University of Padova, where the Venetian nobles studied. We must remember that Venice was a branch of the Byzantine Empire which became powerful enough to capture Constantinople in the Fourth Crusade, shortly after 1200. Venice, like Byzantium, saw religion as a tool of state power, with new cults to be concocted as the need arose.

**THE ARISTOTELIAN NETWORK**

During the Quattrocento, Venice developed in Italy and in Europe an extensive Aristotelian network. Bernardo Bembo, the Venetian ambassador to Florence and the Florence handler for the Venetian Signoria was part of this ("The Venetians are called the new Romans," he wrote.), as was his son Pietro Bembo. The Barbaro family was represented by Francesco, Ermolao the elder and Ermolao the younger. Giorgione's painting "The Three Philosophers" can be seen as depicting three Aristotles: the scholastic Aristotle of the Paris Sorbonne, the Averroistic Aristotle derived from the Arabs, and the "modern" Aristotle of Padova-Rialto, perhaps depicted here with the features of the younger Ermolao Barbaro. Another family prominent in the effort were the Dona', who will pop up again and again in this account. This painting hints at an important feature of Venetian method, namely the strategy of dominating culture, religion, and politics through the expedient of concocting a series of Aristotelian cults or schools which then contend among each other. In the 1400's the Aristotelian school-men of the Sorbonne were a formidable force in theology. But the Venetian oligarchs Giustinian and Quirini, in their pioneering 1513 reform proposals addressed to Pope Leo X attacked the decadent scholasticism of the Sorbonne, saying that the education of clergy must no longer be based on the "fallacious erudition of the Parisians" and similar "pagan fables." [Jedin, "Contributo," p. 112] (Instead, Giustinian-Querini recommended Holy Scripture and Church fathers, especially St. Augustine. They appear to have been thinking of the fundamentalism of isolated Biblical quotations as it has in fact flourished among the Protestant sects.) [See also Schnitzer, p. 236]

It should then come as no surprise to find Martin Luther, a few years later, packaging his own reform movement in a very similar "anti-Aristotelian" garb, despite the Manichean dualism in Luther which led right back to Aristotle's method. Similarly, the pseudo- scientific method cooked up by Francis Bacon using the epistemological writings of Paolo Sarpi portrayed itself as tearing down the authority of Aristotle in favor of scientific experiment. But this does not change the fact that Bacon's method was Aristotelian through and through. Bacon touted induction as the great alternative to syllogisms, but there is no qualitative difference.

Another prong of the Venetian war against the Renaissance was Venice's expansion inside Italy, on the terraferma, with the aim of conquering the entire Italian peninsula and then of using Italy to dominate the world. When it proved impossible to conquer Milan, Florence, the Papal states and Naples, Venetian diplomacy invited France and Spain, the emerging great powers, to invade Italy; the Venetians thought they could pick up the pieces. Between the French conquest of Milan in 1494 and the sack of Rome in 1527, Italy was indeed devastated by these rival armies. But the entry of the new great powers into Italy also prepared the greatest shock in Venetian history: the War of the League of Cambrai. Fighting began in 1509.

The League of Cambrai was the first broad coalition of European states against a nominally Christian nation. It included just about all of Europe: the France of Louis XII, the Holy Roman Empire of Maximilan I, Spain, Pope Julius II, the King of Hungary, the Duke of Savoy, the King of Cyprus, the Dukes of Ferrara, Milan, Florence, Mantova. Some accounts include England. There was a plan to carve up Venice. A painting by Palma Giovane in the Doge's palace depicts Doge Loredan and the lion of St. Mark fighting Europa, who rides a bull and carries a shield embossed with the arms of the member states of the league. Venice sought help from the Ottoman Empire, but was left with no allies. In the decisive battle of Agnadello, French troops crushed the Venetian mercenaries. Venice, as Machiavelli exulted, lost all the land it had stolen in the course of centuries. The Venetians were driven back to their lagoon; their destruction was imminent. Pope Julius II was induced to drop out of the League of Cambrai, but between 1509 and 1513 the French forces, with Florentine money, kept the Venetians on the brink of doom. The state was close to bankruptcy, and had to borrow from the Chigi of Siena. It was also at this time that the Jewish community of Venice came into existence. Previously Jews had been restricted to the role of moneylenders on the terraferma. Jews were obliged to live in the quarter called the ghetto, whose residents were subjected to special discriminatory laws and were obliged to wear a yellow star of David. As the Cambrai crisis deepened, demagogic preachers attempted to blame the disasters of Venetian policy on the new Jewish community. [Gilbert, 18, 39]

In the midst of the hysteria in the lagoon, a religious revival broke out, spurred on by Antonio Contarini, the Patriarch of Aquilea. Religious processions and demonstrations multiplied, for the deified state and the immortal fondi were in gravest danger. Contarini, whose family will be at the center of our story, harangued the Senate on Venetian immorality: "Nunneries served the sexual needs of the rich and powerful. Homosexuality was so widespread that female prostitutes had come to him complaining that they earned so little they had to exercise their profession into old age." [Gilbert, p. 38] Indeed: 10% of the population were female prostitutes at any given time; even more important was the prevalence of sodomy, a sure marker for the presence of the Bogomil-bugger tradition in epistemology.

A badly mauled, indebted and humiliated Venice survived the War of the League of Cambrai, but the Doge told the 2,500 patricians that the new Spanish power had reduced the republic from a great power to "2,500 flies." [H. Brown, p. 150] At the deepest level, some patricians realized that the lagoon city could now be crushed like an egg-shell, and was not a suitable base for world domination. As after 1200 there had been talk of moving the capital, perhaps to Constantinople, so now plans began to hatch that would facilitate a metastasis of the Venetian cancer towards the Atlantic world. To make matters worse, the Portuguese access to India had undercut the Venetian spice monopoly through the Levant; there was talk of building a Suez canal, but this was abandoned. Venice had always thrived through divide and conquer. If Europe could unite against Venice, what could Venice do to divide and rend Europe so thoroughly that it would tear itself to pieces for more than a century?

**A LOOK AT CONTARINI**

To see how this was done, let us look at Gasparo Contarini, whose studies under the Aristotelian Pomponazzi were interrupted when Emperor Maximilian seized Padova. Contarini had helped entertain Agostino Chigi when he was negotiating that vital loan. Back at Venice, Contarini gravitated to a group of young patricians who gathered at the Camaldolese monastery of San Michele on the island of Murano to discuss the salvation of their souls. Remember what Pius II had said of the Venetians: "they wish to appear Christians before the world, but in reality they never think of God and, except for the state, which they do regard as a deity, they hold nothing sacred." [Pius II Commentaries, p. 743]

One participant was Vincenzo Quirini, who had just been in Germany, where he had been serving as the Venetian ambassador to the Empire. "All the princes of the empire, be they prelates or secular rulers, harbor a very ill will towards your most illustrious Lordship, which I have seen and touched with my hands...." [Alberi, series 1, vol. 6, p.43], he warned the Doge. Quirini had seen that war was imminent. Another was Paolo Giustinian, who had gone to the Levant in 1507 (looking for Turkish help?). During the grim winter of 1510-1511, in the midst of the mortal emergency of Cambrai, Giustinian and Quirini turned away from their patrician state careers and entered the austere Camaldolese order, first on Murano and later near Arezzo. Giustinian and Quirini became the advance guard of the Catholic reformation, shaking up the Camaldolese order and later sending the first Catholic reform manifesto, "Pamphlet to Leo X" to the Lateran Council. (This proposes the death penalty for Jews who do not convert and a war with the Turks in alliance with the young leader of Persia, identified as "Sophi." This is all in addition to the attacks on the schoolmen mentioned above. [Schnitzer, p. 227 ff.]

Gasparo Contarini corresponded with Quirini and Giustinian for more than a decade. Parts of this correspondence have survived, and illuminate the actual origins of the Protestant Reformation. To put them in perspective, let us jump from Gasparo Contarini in Venice in 1511 to Martin Luther in the tower of his Wittenberg monastery in the years 1513-1514, the years of Luther's so-called "Thurmerlbenis" or experience in the tower, generally regarded as the starting point of the Protestant reformation.

**FAITH AND WORKS**

The "Thurmerlebenis" brought Luther to the definitive standpoint of his theology: that salvation is by faith alone, with the good works of charity playing no role whatsoever. Luther describes the experience thus:

"These words `just' and `justice of God' were a thunderbolt in my conscience. They soon struck terror in me who heard them. He is just, therefore He punishes. But once when in this tower I was meditating on those words, `the just lives by faith,' `justice of God,' I soon had the thought whether we ought to live justified by faith, and God's justice ought to be the salvation of every believer, and soon my soul was revived. Therefore it is God's justice which justifies us and saves us. This knowledge the Holy Spirit gave me on the privy in the tower." [Grisar, "Luther," VI, p. 506.]

This was Luther's celebrated explication of Paul's Letter to the Romans I.17: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." This passage was ripped out of scriptural and traditional context and made the total passkey. For Luther, the devil is an independent power who rules over the material world, so good works belong to the devil; human reason is the "bride and whore" of the devil. In those days of greater theological knowledge, this could be clearly recognized as a new variation on Manicheanism, the idea that good and evil are equally necessary parts of the creation. According to such a Gnostic view, the material world is inherently bad, and only the spiritual world can be good. Something not so different was professed by the Bogomils. Luther's contemporary and sometime associate Philip Melanchton saw Luther in exactly these terms: "Manichean delirium." Luther attempted to portray his own viewpoint as a return to St. Augustine's stress on grace as against the ethical notions of the late Graeco-Roman world, but this was disingenuous. Luther's marginal jottings to Augustine's Confessions have come to light; an interesting one recaptures Luther's reaction to Augustine's polemics against the Manicheans and their idea of the two coequal cosmic forces locked in struggle. Luther's annotation: "This is false. This is the origin of all Augustine's errors." [see Socci and Ricci, and Theobald Beer.] Luther appears to reflect the influence of the pseudo-Hermes Trismegistus and his "Book of the 24 Philosophers."

**CONTARINI AND LUTHER**

But in the given historical context it is more than interesting that the top Venetian oligarch of the day - Gasparo Contarini - in 1511 went through a Thurmerlebnis of his own. In the Camaldolese monastery of Monte Corona above Frascati in the summer of 1943, the German scholar Hubert Jedin, acting on the advice of Giuseppe de Luca, discovered 30 letters from Gasparo Contarini to the Cambai Camaldolese, Giustinian and Quirini. One is from Eastertide 1511, when Contarini went first to the Benedictine monastery on the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, and then to San Sebastiano. Contarini would have us believe that he was contemplating becoming a monk himself, but concluded that even a monastic life of asceticism and good works would never be enough to atone for his sins. This is similar to Luther's starting point. A holy father told Contarini that the way to salvation is "much broader than what many people think." Contarini writes:

"... I began to think to myself what that happiness [salvation] might be and what our condition is. And I truly understood that if I performed all the penances possible, and even many more, even if they were all taken together, they would not be enough to make up for my past sins, to say nothing of meriting that felicity. And having seen that infinite goodness, that love which always burns infinitely and loves us little worms so much that our intellect cannot fathom it, having only by its goodness made us out of nothing and exalted us to such a height ... We must attempt only to unite ourselves with our head [Christ] with faith, with hope, and with that small love of which we are capable. As regards satisfaction for sins committed, and into which human weakness falls, His passion is sufficient and more than sufficient. Through this thought I was changed from great fear and suffering to happiness. I began with my whole spirit to turn to this greatest good which I saw, for love of me, on the cross, with his arms open, and his breast opened up right to his heart. This I, the wretch who had not had enough courage for the atonement of my iniquities to leave the world and do penance, turned to him; and since I asked him to let me share in the satisfaction which he, without any sins of his own, had made for us, he was quick to accept me and to cause his Father completely to cancel the debt I had contracted, which I myself was incapable of satisfying." [Jedin, "Ein `Thurmerlbenis' des jungen Contarini," p. 117 and Dermot Fenlon, "Heresy and Obedience in Tridentine Ital." p.8.]

The parallels to Luther are evident, even though Contarini still allows hope and a little love a role in salvation, in addition to faith. Later, in a letter of 1523, after Contarini had seen Luther, he would go beyond this and wholly embrace the Lutheran position:

"Wherefore I have truly come to this firm conclusion which, although first I read it and heard it, now nonetheless through experience I penetrate very well with my intellect: and that is that no one can justify himself with his works or purge his soul of its inclinations, but that it is necessary to have recourse to divine grace which is obtained through faith in Jesus Christ, as Saint Paul says, and say with him: `Blessed is the man without works, to whom the Lord did not impute sin....' Now I see both in myself and in others that when a man thinks he has acquired some virtue, just at the moment it is all the easier for him to fall. Whence I conclude that every living man is a thing of utter vanity, and that we must justify ourselves through the righteousness of another, and that means of Christ: and when we join ourselves to him, his righteousness is made ours, nor must we rely on ourselves to the smallest degree, but must say: `From ourselves we received the answer of death.'" [Jedin, p. 127]

Contarini was always much more careful in the writings he published; in his treatise *De Praedestinatione* he says that Christians should "seek to exalt as much as possible the grace of Christ and faith in him, and to humble as much as possible the confidence we feel in our works, our knowledge and our will."

These letters, first published in 1950, make Contarini the first Protestant, the undisputed caposcuola among those in Italy who argued for salvation ex sola fede, and who were called evangelicals, crypto-Protestants, or "spirituali," to whom we will return shortly.

Let us consider first whether there was any way that the tidings of Contarini's new stress on faith, developed during the Cambrai crisis, might have been transmitted to Germany. There was, in the form of a Venetian Aristotelian network which reached into the court of Frederick the Wise, the Elector of Saxony, who protected Luther from Pope Leo X's extradition demands and from the ban the empire placed on Luther by Emperor Charles V.

**MUTIANUS RUFUS AND SPALATIN**

Our knowledge of this network begins with the figure of one Conradus Mutianus Rufus, who was in the early 1500s the Kanonikus of the Marienstift in Gotha, a Latin and Greek scholar and cleric who had traveled to Italy during the period 1499-1503, and who had studied in Bologna and visited other cities, including Venice. Mutianus Rufus had been in contact with members of the Signoria: "I saw Venetian patricians wearing a silken belt which hung down on one side and went around one arm," [*Briefwechsel des Conradus Mutianus*, p. 249] he wrote to a correspondent in 1509. Mutianus came to know Aldus Manutius, the celebrated Venetian publisher of Latin, Greek, and other learned texts (and the target of Erasmus's satire in the hilarious *Opulentia Sordida*). With Aldus we are at the heart of the Venetian intelligence networks among the self-styled humanists around 1500. In February 1506, with the Cambrai war clouds on the horizon, Aldus had written to Mutianus's disciple Urbanus: "I most highly esteem S. Mutianus Rufus because of his learning and humanity and confess myself to be very much in his debt, on the one hand because he constantly speaks well of me, and on the other because he kindly procured for me the friendship of a man decked out with learning and holy ways like you. And therefore if I did not only esteem you and Mutianus and Spalatinus completely as men both learned and well-disposed towards me, but also love you so very much in return, I would be the most ungrateful man of all. But I love you and honor and render you immortal thanks because you have summoned me to this mutual good will." [See *Briefwechsel*, p. 37.]

The other disciple of Mutianus Rufus named here, Spalatinus, is the one we focus on. Georg Burckhardt was born in the town of Spalt, near Nuremberg, in 1484. His birthplace is an omen, for Burckhardt, or Spalatinus in his humanist name, was destined to play a decisive role, second perhaps only to Luther himself, in the greatest church split [*Kirchenspaltung*] of recent history. Spalatin, a student at Erfurt, became a protégé of Mutianus Rufus in 1504, visiting him in his Gotha office where "Farewell to Cares" was inscribed on the door. Another of Mutianus's network was Johann Lang of Erfurt, who would shortly reside in an Augustinian monastery alongside a certain Martin Luther, who had studied in Erfurt after 1501 at the same time as Spalatin. [Irmgard Hoess, *George Spalatin* (Weimar, 1956)]

In 1505, Mutianus Rufus found Spalatin a job at the monastery in Georgenthal, where he was responsible for purchasing books for the library. The orders were made with Aldus Manutius in Venice, with payment by way of the Fugger copper mines in Hohenkirchen. In December 1505, Spalatin wrote to Mutianus to make sure that he included in the order the *Castigationes Plinianae*, written by Ermolao Barbaro the Younger. Later Spalatin became a personal secretary to the Elector of Saxony, Frederick the Wise, gradually acquiring responsibility for Frederick's prized collection of relics of the saints, and also for the newly founded University of Wittenberg and for its library. Gradually Spalatin became something like a junior minister, responsible for educational and religious affairs.

In 1512, during the Cambrai war, Mutianus and Spalatin received a report that Aldus was on his way to Germany with a cargo of precious Greek and Latin manuscripts; Spalatin wrote to Aldus on March 25, 1512, proposing that Aldus meet with Frederick the Wise for a major book purchase. Was Aldus planning a mission in order to secure strategic help for the Most Serene Republic in Venice's hour of need? Aldus apparently did not make the trip, but in December 1512, Frederick the Wise wrote to Aldus, and Spalatin prepared the Latin text. In 1515, Spalatin placed a new book order for Greek and Latin texts with the Aldus firm.

It is not known exactly when Spalatin met Luther for the first time, but Luther's first extant letter to Spalatin is placed in about February 1514, in the middle of the *Thurmerlebnis* [tower experience] period. Spalatin had asked Luther's opinion on the controversy over the Hebrew and Talmudic studies of Johannes Reuchlin, whom Frederick was supporting. This began a correspondence, of which 400 of Luther's letters to Spalatin, but only a few of Spalatin's to Luther, have survived. Spalatin appears as Luther's interlocutor in theology ("he influenced Luther very strongly in the direction of clarity," says Hoess), but his adviser and indeed his controller in matters of political tactics and strategy. The letters peak in 1521, but continue thereafter; "there is no one in our group whom I would prefer to you," wrote Luther to Spalatin on December 12, 1524.

In 1515-16 Luther gave his lecture on salvation through faith alone, although the first written expression of this seems to have been in a letter to Spalatin of October 19, 1516, where he wrote: "First man must change himself; only then can his works be changed" - a leading idea expressed by Giustinian-Quirini.

In September 1516 Spalatin joined the Kanzelei of Frederick. Here Spalatin acted as Luther's intercessor, especially after he became the confessor to the vacillating and indecisive Frederick in 1517-18. After Luther, on Halloween 1517, had posted his theses on the door of the Wittenberg cathedral, it was Spalatin who convinced Frederick to keep the matter in Saxony, and not permit the case to go to Rome. When Luther went to Heidelberg for a theological debate, Spalatin made sure he had an escort provided by Frederick. In July 1518, Luther was summoned to Rome by the Holy See, and he appealed urgently for help: "I now need your help most urgently, my Spalatin, and so does the honor of our whole university!" At the next imperial diet, Cardinal Cajetan asked for money to fight the Turks, only to be answered by a rehearsal of the complaints of the German nation against the Holy See. Here Frederick was able to convince Maximilian to allow Luther's case to stay in Germany. The anti-papal and anti-imperial princely oligarchical party coalesced in support of Luther. This made what Leo X had dismissed as "a quarrel among monks" into the Reformation.

Later we find Spalatin unsuccessfully telling the hot-headed Luther to keep a low profile. At one point Luther was requesting that official documents of Saxony be falsely dated to protect him. (Hoess, p. 131) When Luther was called to Augsburg, Spalatin secured an escort, by indirect means.

So sure was Luther of Frederick's support (and Spalatin's influence) that he could write to Cardinal Cajetan on October 18, 1518: "For I know that I can make myself more agreeable to our most illustrious prince by appealing rather than by recanting." (Hoess, p. 136) Later the same autumn, Spalatin, fearing Luther was in danger, warned him to flee, and Luther organized a farewell dinner in his cloister, but a message from Spalatin then arrived telling him that the danger was past, and he could remain. (This puts Luther's "Here I stay, I cannot do otherwise" in a new light.) After Luther had publicly burned Leo X's bull of excommunication in December 1520, Frederick protected him from extradition. Spalatin appealed for and got from Erasmus a statement in support of Luther against Rome. In his response, Erasmus warned that those handling Luther's case on behalf of the Roman curia were in effect acting as provocateurs, seeking to exploit the Luther issue in order to suppress humanistic learning. For Erasmus, humanistic learning was Platonic. There is every indication that Cajetan, Eck, Aleandro, and others acting in the name of Leo X were indeed doing what Erasmus suggested.

Spalatin accompanied Luther to the Diet of Worms in 1521 as his principal handler, spin doctor, and adviser. Here Contarini was also present, though all sources consulted are suspiciously emphatic that Contarini, present as the Venetian ambassador to Charles V, never met personally with Luther, although the two were at the plenary sessions. After Charles V had set the ban of the empire on Luther, Spalatin organized the coup de main which brought Luther into the safety of Frederick's Wartburg Castle. Here Luther's fame and following grew rapidly while he enjoyed immunity; the empire shortly went to war with France in one of the sequelae of Cambrai. Later, Spalatin would go on to become Saxony's chancellor or prime minister.

Were there other channels of Venetian communication between the lagoon and Saxony during this period? There was at least one other, which involved Frederick's hobby of collecting the relics of the saints, a practice Luther condemned as idolatrous. "Since 1515, a German friar, Burckhard Schenk von Simau, had been a reader in theology at the Franciscan convent of San Nicolo' in Venice. Perhaps because of his kinship with the Ernestine branch of the Saxon ruling line, he had a standing commission from Frederick the Wise to purchase books and relics for the Elector's outstanding collections. One of Schenk's most useful Italian contacts proved to be [Pier Paolo] Vergerio's brother Giacomo, a fellow Franciscan, who told him that the eastern coast of the Adriatic was a rich hunting ground for relics and suggested that younger members of his family might be available to make deliveries to Saxony. Accordingly, in July 1521, Aurelio Vergerio set off on a trip to the domain of Frederick the Wise, only to turn back at Innsbruck on account of illness. Schenk then turned his attention to another member of the Vergerio clan. Writing on October 19, 1521 to Georg Spalatin, the Elector's counselor, he stated that he had met Pier Paolo [Vergerio], a gifted youth who ranked high among the students of law at Padova [Padua] and was well trained in the humanities. The young Capodistrian, Schenk asserted, was interested in completing his legal studies at Wittenberg. Assuring Spalatin that Vergerio would be a credit to the university, the friar urged that he be strongly recommended to the Elector. Apparently the response from Spalatin was encouraging, for Pier Paolo made preparations to leave for Saxony; he was deterred from starting his journey, however, by reports of an outbreak of plague along the route. By the following summer the invitation had been withdrawn. "On July 28, 1522, Spalatin informed Schenk that in the light of the recent religious developments in Wittenberg, Frederick the Wise considered it prudent to cease collecting relics. Spalatin added that he could promise nothing further to the Vergerios." (Schutte, pp. 30-31.) According to another account, Spalatin wrote to an unnamed "Venetian merchant" at this time: "I am returning herewith the relics as well as the crucifix, in hopes you will sell them as advantageously as possible, for in Venice they probably cost more and are valued more highly than here. Here the common man is so well instructed that he thinks (and rightly so) that only faith and confidence toward God, and brotherly love, are enough." [H.G. Haile, p. 8]

**THE SPIRITUALI**

Pier Paolo Vergerio of Capodistria attended the University of Padova and married Diana Contarini of the Contarini family in 1526. [*Nuntiaturberichte aus Deutschland*, I, p. 14] He later became a papal diplomat and met with Luther in Wittenberg in 1535, during the period of the Smalkaldic League, the Protestant alliance which warred against Charles V in 1546-47. Later, Vergerio was to become an active publicist in the Protestant cause. Vergerio belongs to the group of Spirituali around Contarini.

When Contarini returned in 1525 from his mission with Charles V in Germany, the Low Countries, and Spain, he told the Senate: "The character and customs of the Germans are close to feral; they are robust and courageous in war; they have little regard for death; they are suspicious but not fraudulent or malicious; they are not sublimely intelligent, but they apply themselves with so much determination and perseverance that they succeed as well in various manual crafts as they do in letters, in which many are now devoting themselves and make great profit.... The forces of Germany, if they were unified, would be very great, but because of the divisions which exist among them, they are only small...." [Alberi, p. 21] Venetian publishing and Venetian networks would now be mobilized to guarantee the spread of Lutheranism and its variants all over Germany in order to perpetuate and exacerbate these divisions.

In 1516, a year before Luther's Wittenberg theses, Contarini wrote *De Officio Episcopi*, a treatise of church reform for his friend Lippomanno, who was about to become a bishop. Contarini then, as we have seen, served as Venetian ambassador to Charles V and the Pope. During the early 1530s, Contarini began meeting with a group of patricians who represented the heart of the Italian evangelical or crypto-Protestant movement, and who would launch the Reformation inside the Roman Catholic Church during the pontificate of Paul III Farnese. The meetings were often held in the gardens of Cortese's San Giorgio Maggiore. These were the Spirituali, interested in the writings of Juan Valdez of Spain, who had come to Naples to teach that justification was given to us as God's gratuitous gift. Our responsibility, said Valdez, was to take this Beneficio di Cristo given to us through the Holy Spirit and manifested in good works, which were however without merit. Awareness of all this came to Valdez, like Contarini, through "*esperienza*." Valdez's followers were mainly oligarchs, and his works were published in Venice.

Along with Contarini there were now: Gregorio Cortese, the abbot of the Benedictines of San Giorgio Maggiore; the English émigré Reginald Pole, a member of the former English ruling house of Plantagenet now living at Pietro Bembo's villa (Bembo had changed his lifestyle enough to become Bishop of Bergamo and would become a cardinal); and G.P. Caraffa of Naples, linked to the Oratory of Divine Love in Rome, co-founder of the new Theatine Order and later Pope Paul IV.

Arrayed later around these were the Bishop of Carpentras Jacopo Sadoleto, G.M. Giberti, the spirituale bishop of Verona on Venetian territory, and Cardinal Morone, who presided at the last sessions of the Council of Trent. There was the papal legate Vergerio. Later, through the circle set up by Reginald Pole at Viterbo, Vittoria Colonna and Giulia Gonzaga would come into the picture, joined by Marcantonio Flamminio, Ochino, Vermigli, and others. Vergerio, Ochino, and Vermigli later became apostates, going over to Protestantism. Many ideas common to this group were expressed in a tract called the *Beneficio di Cristo*, and were popular among Benedictines. The *Beneficio* had been written by a Benedictine (Benedetto Fontanino) using Calvin's "Institutes of the Christian Religion" of 1539. This Benedetto had been at Cortese's San Giorgio Maggiore around 1534. [Fenlon, chapter 5] With the help of Marcantonio Flamminio, the *Beneficio* was published in Venice in 1543, and sold 40,000 copies in that city alone.

The Spirituali later tended to separate into two wings: The first were liberal, tolerant, conciliatory, open to dialogue with Protestants, and included especially Pole, Morone, and Vittoria Colonna. Then there were the zelanti, like Caraffa, who tended towards militant and inquisitorial methods, and who came into conflict with Spirituali like Pole and Morone, accusing them of heresy. Contarini had died before this division became pronounced.

Reginald Pole had been sent to Padova by Henry VIII because his claim on the English throne was as good as or better than Henry's: Pole was a Plantagenet. When he joined the general post-Cambrai shift out of Aristotelian letters and into piety, he was influenced by a certain Padre Marco of the Paduan Benedictines of Santa Giustina. Pole was close to the Venetian banker Alvise Priuli. Around 1540, Pole was the governor of Viterbo in the Papal states, where he developed a close relation with Vittoria Colonna of the Roman black nobility. She had been in the Juan Valdez circle and the Oratory of Divine Love. In 1541, her kinsman, Ascanio Colonna, waged civil war against Pope Paul III Farnese but was defeated. Vittoria Colonna was known as a poetess whose "Rime Spirituali" expressed some of the favorite themes of the pro-Venetian Spirituali. Pole on one occasion advised Vittoria Colonna that she should believe as if salvation depended on faith alone, while acting as if it were dependent on good works as well. Contarini dedicated his treatise on the freedom of the will to Vittoria Colonna. As for Pole, he is important because of his later role in England.

**THE ENGLISH SCHISM**

In 1527, the year of the Sack of Rome, King Henry VIII began to mature his plan to divorce his wife Catherine of Aragon, who had given him a daughter but no son, and to marry the court lady Anne Boleyn. When Pope Clement VII Medici, under occupation by Charles V, refused to grant an annulment, Henry VIII appealed to scholars and universities for their opinions. One such opinion came from the Franciscan Friar Francesco Giorgi, a member of the Venetian Zorzi patrician clan. Giorgi was the author of *De Harmonia Mundi* (Venice 1525), a mystical work with influences deriving from the Hebrew Cabala. Giorgi assured Henry VIII that the Biblical text applicable to his situation was Leviticus 18:16, in which marriage between a man and his brother's wife was forbidden. Catherine had been previously married to Henry's brother Arthur. Deuteronomy 25.5-6, in which such a marriage is proscribed, was irrelevant, Giorgi-Zorzi told Henry. Giorgi, accompanied by the Hebrew scholar Marco Raphael, journeyed to England, where they arrived in 1531; Giorgi remained at the English court until his death in 1540. Giorgi is reputed to have contributed mightily to the initiation of a school of Venetian pseudo- Platonic mysticism in England. This was later called Rosicrucianism, among other names, and influenced such figures as John Dee, Robert Fludd, Sir Philip Sydney, Edmund Spenser, and Sir Francis Bacon. Such were the Masonic beginnings of the Venetian Party, which, by the accession of James I, became the dominant force in British life. Bembo and Pole had their own contacts with Cabalists, but Contarini had the inside track: Giorgi lived in Contarini's immediate neighborhood, and Contarini grew up and went to school with Giorgi's nephews. Later, Contarini and Giorgi became close friends. (Dittrich, p. 456) Giorgi and Raphael were clearly acting for the Signoria and the Council of Ten.

Shortly before the arrival of Giorgi, Thomas Cromwell replaced Cardinal Wolsey as the chief adviser to Henry VIII. Cromwell had all the marks of the Venetian agent. Cromwell had reportedly been a mercenary soldier in Italy during the wars of the early 1500s, and, according to Pole, was at one time the clerk or bookkeeper to a Venetian merchant. One version has Cromwell working for 20 years for a Venetian branch office in Antwerp. This was the man who judicially murdered St. Thomas More, the eminent Erasmian. "Yet it was apparently at this very time, just after Cardinal Wolsey's fall, that [Cromwell] found means of access to the king's presence and suggested to him that policy of making himself head of the Church of England," which would enable him to have his own way in the matter of the divorce and give him other advantages as well. So at least we must suppose from the testimony of Cardinal Pole, writing nine or ten years later. Henry, he tells us, seeing that even Wolsey "could no longer advance the project [of his divorce], was heard to declare with a sigh that he could prosecute it no longer; and those about him rejoiced for a while in the belief that he would abandon a policy so fraught with danger. But he had scarcely remained two days in this state of mind when a messenger of Satan (whom [Pole] afterwards names as Cromwell) addressed him and blamed the timidity of his councilors in not devising means to gratify his wishes. They were considering the interests of his subjects more than his, and seemed to think princes bound by the same principles as private persons were. But a king was above the laws, as he had the power to change them, and in this case he had the law of God actually in his favor...." Pole wrote this in a dedicatory epistle to Charles V. [Pole, *Epistolae*, 113-140] Pole says that Cromwell offered him a copy of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, which he highly recommended. "I found this type of book to be written by an enemy of the human race," Pole wrote later. "It explains every means whereby religion, justice, and any inclination toward virtue could be destroyed." [Dwyer, p. xxiii] But *The Prince* was published years later.

Henry VIII later called on Pole for his opinion on "the king's great matter." Pole responded with a violently provocative tirade designed to goad the paranoid Henry into a homicidal fit. "I have long been aware that you are afflicted with a serious and most dangerous disease," Pole wrote. "I know that your deeds are the source of all this evil." "The succession of the kingdom is called into doubt for love of a harlot.... Anyone resisting your lies is punished by death. Your miserable apes of sophists talk nonsense.... Your pestilential flatterers.... By the stench of his mind a flatterer happens upon such tricks." [ Dwyer, p. xviii]

Pole also revealed to Henry that he had urged Charles V to cease hostilities with the Ottoman Empire, and direct his military might to wiping out Henry's regime. [Dwyer, pp. 271-78] Since Pole could easily have assumed the role of Plantagenet pretender, Henry had to take this very seriously, which added to his mental imbalance. Henry took revenge by executing Pole's mother and brother, who had both stayed behind in England and whose fate Pole had curiously neglected when he sent his challenge to Henry.

The creation and preservation of a Protestant regime in England was one of the principal goals of Venetian policy. Wars between England and France, and between England and Spain, were the essence of Venetian policy. After the death of Henry VIII and the death of his son Edward VI, Pole returned to England as the chief adviser and virtual controller of the Catholic Queen Mary Tudor, known as Bloody Mary. Earlier Pole had been considered a candidate to marry Mary, but now he was a cardinal and papal legate. Mary was wed to Philip II of Spain, creating the possibility of an Anglo-Spanish rapprochement that was highly unacceptable to Venice. Mary's succession was helped by Sir William Cecil, the first Baron Burghley, a Venetian agent who had been a key figure of the last period of Edward VI's reign. Pole, even though he was one of the Spirituali, could be highly inquisitorial when the interests of Venice required slaughter to create religious enmities that would last for centuries: Between 1553 and 1558, Pole and Mary presided over what many British historians claim to be the largest number of politically motivated executions in the history of England. Their claim is dubious, but some 300 persons were burned for heresy, and one Anglican prelate described Pole as "butcher and scourge of the Anglican church." Pole, acting under instructions from Pope Paul IV, also insisted on full restitution of the church lands and property seized by Henry VIII, which would have wiped out a large section of the English nobility. These measures made Mary so unpopular that it was clear that she would not have a Catholic successor. That successor would be Elizabeth, under the dominant influence of Cecil, who had early gone over to the opposition to Bloody Mary Tudor. In his 1551 report to the Venetian Senate, Daniele Barbaro remarked on the religious habits of the English, "among whom nothing is more inconstant than their decrees on matters of religion, since one day they do one thing and the next day they do another. This feeds the resistance of those who have accepted the new laws, but who find them most offensive, as was seen in the rebellions of 1549. And in truth, if they had a leader, even though they have been most severely punished, there is no doubt that they would rebel again. It is true that the people of London are more disposed than the others to observe what they are commanded, since they are closer to the court." [Alberi, series I, volume 2, pp. 242-43]

**THE COUNTER-REFORMATION**

What is called the Catholic Reformation or Counter- Reformation is said to begin with the pontificate of Paul III Farnese. Paul III had studied with the humanist Pomponius Laetus. He had been made cardinal by Alexander VI Borgia, usually seen by church historians as the most reprobate of the Renaissance popes. Because Giulia Farnese had been Alexander VI's mistress at this time, Cardinal Farnese was known as the petticoat cardinal. Paul III had several children of his own, two of whom he made cardinals and governors of provinces controlled by the church. It was Paul III who elevated Contarini, Pole, Sadoleto, and Caraffa and the rest of the Venetian group to the cardinalate. Later, Pietro Bembo, Morone, and other Venetians and Venetian assets followed.

In 1537, Paul III directed Contarini to chair a commission that would develop ways to reform the church. Contarini was joined by Caraffa, Sadoleto, Pole, Giberti, Cortese of San Giorgio Maggiore, plus prelates from Salerno and Brindisi - an overwhelmingly Venetian commission. This was the *Consilium de Emendenda Ecclesia*. The Contarini commission at the outset sought to identify the cause of the evils and abuses of the church, including simony, multiple benefices, bishops who did not live in their sees, moral failures, sybaritic lifestyles among prelates, and the like. The commission said nothing of oligarchism or usury, but gave all the blame to the excessive power which the Roman pontiffs had arrogated to themselves. "From this results, even more because adulation always follows the supreme power just as a shadow follows a body, and the path of truth to the ears of the prince was always a very difficult one, that, as the doctors immediately proclaim, who teach that the pope is master of all benefices, on that account, since a master can by law sell what is his, it necessarily follows that the pope cannot be accused of simony, so that the will of the pope, whatever it might be, must be the rule which directs these operations and action. From which it results without doubt that whatever the pope wants is also sanctioned by law. And from this source, as if from a Trojan horse, have come into the church of God so much abuse and such serious sickness, that we now see the church afflicted almost by despair of recovery. The news of these things has reached the unbelievers (as Your Holiness is told by experts) who ridicule the Christian religion chiefly for this reason, to the point that because of us, because of us we say, the name of Christ is blasphemed among the peoples." [*Concilium Tridentinum*, XII, pp. 134-35]

The overall thrust of the document is best summed up in the following two passages:

"We think, Holy Father, that this has to be established before all other things: as *Aristotle says in his 'Politics'*, just as in any republic, so in the ecclesiastical governance of the church of Christ, this rule has to be observed before all others: that the laws have to be complied with as much as possible. For we do not think we are permitted to exempt ourselves from these laws, except for an urgent and necessary reason." (p. 135, emphasis in original)

Thus, Aristotle was made the guiding light of the "reform," in the document that opened the campaign for the Council of Trent. The leading anti-Aristotelian Platonist of the day did not escape condemnation: "And since they habitually read the colloquia of Erasmus to children in the schools, in which colloquia there are many things which shape these uncultivated souls towards impiety, therefore the readings of these things and any others of the same type ought to be prohibited in literary classes." (p. 141)

Erasmus had broken with Luther very early, despite the maneuvers of Spalatin, and had attacked Luther's ideas of the bondage of the will with a reaffirmation of the Platonic concept of the freedom of the will. Contarini and Pole had both corresponded with Erasmus, and Paul III offered to make him a cardinal on one occasion. The accusation made here is almost identical to Luther's, who had told Erasmus, "You are not pious!"

The Vatican archives, then and now, contained the detailed reform proposals elaborated by Pius II and Nicolaus of Cusa during the previous century. An honest attempt at reform would have based itself explicitly on these proposals. The reform undertaken by the Contarini commission was going in a very different direction, and some of the works of Pius II were shortly placed on the *Index of Prohibited Books*.

The Vatican wanted the Contarini commission's report to be kept secret, but it was promptly leaked and published by such diverse sponsors as Vergerio, Luther, and the German Protestant Sturmius; the English version was issued by one Richard Morsyne in 1538.

In 1539, Contarini was instrumental in convincing Paul III to approve the creation of Ignazio de Loyola's Society of Jesus as a holy order. In 1541, Contarini was the papal representative along with Morone at the discussions among Catholics and Protestants in Regensburg, where he proposed a compromise solution on the key issue of justification; on the one hand recognizing a *justitia imputata* to satisfy the Lutherans, while retaining some role for the *justitia inhaerens*. The compromise was rejected by both Wittenberg and Rome, and to some it seemed that Contarini had been trying to create a third camp. Contarini died in 1542.

The first session of the Council of Trent was convoked under Paul III, with Pole and Caraffa as members of the committee of cardinals to oversee the proceedings. At the death of Paul III Farnese in 1549, Pole turned out to be the papal candidate of the Emperor Charles V and of the Spirituali. He was assisted by Priuli, the Venetian banker. The anti- Spanish Caraffa was the other homestretch contender, receiving support from the French cardinals led by Guise. At one point, Pole was almost made Pope by imperial acclamation. During one ballot, Pole came within a single vote of a two-thirds majority and thus of Peter's chair. Caraffa turned against Pole during the conclave and accused him of "certain errors" in religion; Caraffa claimed that Pole had maintained "a platoon of heretics and of highly suspect persons" in his home in Viterbo. Guise accused Pole of leaving the Council of Trent in order to avoid a debate on justification. Finally, Cardinal Del Monte was elected as Julius III, and reigned from 1550 to 1555. Pole was one of his seven commissioners for the protection of the faith. Then Marcellus II Cervini died after a month in office, and was succeeded with Venetian help by Caraffa, who took the name of Paul IV. Caraffa started a reign of terror against the surviving Spirituali, many of them his former associates. Morone was jailed in 1557, and Pole was instructed to return to Rome to face a trial for heresy on account of his activities in Viterbo. Pole was protected by Mary Tudor. As it turned out, Pole died a few hours after Mary.

**THE INDEX**

The pontificate of Paul IV marked a long pause in the Council of Trent, since Caraffa preferred to act as an autocrat. In 1557, Caraffa instituted the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*. [*Index, Venice*: Aldus, 1564] It was no surprise that the writings of Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Melanchthon, Juan Valdez, the Anabaptists, the Koran, and the 1531 Augsburg Confession were banned on pain of excommunication and possible jail or banishment. Also outlawed were the scabrous *Facetia* of Poggio Bracciolini and the writings of Pietro Aretino. But also on the list were all of Peter Abelard, Dante's *De Monarchia*, all of Machiavelli, most of the works of Erasmus (including the *Colloquies*, the *Praise of Folly*, and others), Lorenzo Valla, and even a text identified as Alcuin's commentary on the Trinity, which was alleged to be by Calvin. Most stunning is the presence of Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini himself, Pope Pius II, one of the defenders of the church and of civilization: The *Index* banned those writings which Aeneas Silvius had retracted, presumably in a papal bull of April 26, 1463; these sustained theses of the conciliar movement. Pius II had also retracted youthful writings on love themes; the effect on all of Pius II's works was chilling.

The anti-Platonic and pro-Aristotelian bias of the Index was a barometer of who now held power in Rome. By 1565, there were no fewer than seven Venetian cardinals, one of the largest if not the largest national caucus. In the early 1600s, the general of the Jesuits would be Bellarmine, who had been steeped in Aristotle from his youth. Francesco Toledo, a professor at the Collegio Romano, attributed to Aristotle's logic a perfection so total that "scarcely anyone has surpassed him in any point." "Moreover," added Toledo, "it appears that he has been more received by the church than other philosophers, especially in the last millennium; and he has been used in the instruction of youth to the exclusion of all others." [Bouwsma, p. 296] Interestingly, Contarini's friend Cardinal Morone was released after two years in jail and became the presiding officer of the final session of the Council of Trent.

**CRISIS IN VENICE**

During the second half of the 1500s, Venice was in rapid decline. The naval victory of Lepanto in 1571 had not been sufficient to regain Cyprus from the Ottoman Empire, and Venice had been widely attacked for making a separate peace with the Ottomans. After the Cyprus war, Venice entered into a permanent commercial crisis, in part because of English and Dutch rivalry. Textile production of silk and wool also declined. The same happened with printing in part because of the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*. Shipbuilding in the arsenal diminished. In 1575-77, there was an outbreak of the plague, with tens of thousands of deaths in Venice. In 1590, there was a serious famine, and food supplies did not return to normal until 1594. Part of this impoverishment was due to the fact that Venice, in spite of its wretched economy, was pursuing a policy of totally retiring the public debt. This was made easier by going from a gold to a silver standard in 1562. The Cyprus war had cost 6 million ducats, but the government now paid off the Monte Vecchio, the Monto Novo, the Monte Novissimo, and the Monte di Sussidio, so that by 1600 all had been liquidated. In 1600, Venice was reported to have a reserve hoard in coin of 12-14 million ducats. It is evident that family fondi that had been invested in the monti [loans] were being transferred elsewhere as flight capital: One destination was certainly the Amsterdam Bank, which was founded at about this time. Later in the century there would be the Bank of England.

After 1582, the oligarchical Venetian government institutions were controlled by the Giovani, a cabal of patricians who had emerged from a salon of strategic discussions called Ridotto Morosini. The participants included Morosini, Nicolo Contarini, Leonardo Dona, Antonio Querini, the Servite monks Paolo Sarpi, and Fulgenzio Micanzio, Galileo Galilei, and sometimes Giordano Bruno. The Giovani were determined to be more aggressive against Spain, which occupied Milan and Naples, and against the papacy: these Sarpi called the Diacatholicon. The Giovani were interested in France, Holland, Protestant Germany, and England as counterweights to the Diacatholicon. Out of the Ridotto Morosini would come the French Enlightenment, British empiricism, and the Thirty Years' War.

Let us sample the epistemology of the Giovani, using Sarpi and his precursor Paolo Paruta. The Giovani were skeptics, full of contempt for man and for human reason. Sarpi admired the French essayist Michel de Montaigne, who had been educated by a father who had been in Italy as a soldier and probably imbibed Venetian teachings; Montaigne himself had made the pilgrimage to Venice. Sarpi agreed with Montaigne that man was the most imperfect of animals.

Sarpi was a precursor of Bentham's hedonistic calculus. Man was a creature of appetites, and these were insatiable, especially the *libido dominandi*. "We are always acquiring happiness, we have never acquired it and never will," wrote Sarpi. [Pensiero 250]

Paruta had been an empiricist: "Although our intellect may be divine from its birth, nevertheless here below it lives among these earthly members and cannot perform its operations without the help of bodily sensation. By their means, drawing into the mind the images of material things, it represents these things to itself and in this way forms its concepts of them. By the same token it customarily rises to spiritual contemplations not by itself but awakened by sense objects." [Bouwsma, p. 206]

Sarpi was an empiricist: "There are four modes of philosophizing: the first with reason alone, the second with sense alone, the third with reason and then sense, and the fourth beginning with sense and ending with reason. The first is the worst, because from it we know what we would like to be, not what is. The third is bad because we many times distort what is into what we would like, rather than adjusting what we would like to what is. The second is true but crude, permitting us to know little and that rather of things than of their causes. The fourth is the best we can have in this miserable life." ("Scritti filosofici e teologici," Bari: Laterza, 1951, Pensiero 146) That is Francis Bacon's inductive method. Bacon's ideas about inductive method were taken from the "Arte di ben pensare" and other Sarpi writings.

For Sarpi, experience means the perception of physical objects by the senses. For Sarpi there are no true universals: "Essence and universality are works of the mind," he wrote disparagingly. [Pensiero 371] Sarpi was brought up on Duns Scotus and William of Ockham. Sarpi was also a pragmatist, arguing that "we despise knowledge of things of which we have no need." [Pensiero 289] Sarpi was also a cultural relativist, and a precursor of David Hume: Every culture has its own idea of order, he said, and "therefore the republics, the buildings, the politics of the Tartars and the Indians are different." [Pensiero 159].

With Paolo Paruta, we already have the economic man enshrined in the myths of Adam Smith: "The desire to grow rich is as natural in us as the desire to live. Nature provides the brute animals with the things necessary for their lives; but in man, whom it makes poor, naked, and subject to many needs, it inserts this desire for riches and gives him intelligence and industry to acquire them." [Bouwsma, p. 211] A speaker in Paruta's dialogues expresses the views of the Physiocrats, saying that wealth derived from farming and grazing is "more true and natural" than other forms. [Bouwsma, p. 212]

Paruta's treatment of the fall of the Roman empire appears to be the starting point for Gibbon: "This stupendous apparatus, constructed over a long course of years through the great virtue and the many exertions of so many valorous men, had finally run the course common to human things, that is to be dissolved and to fall to earth; and with its ruin it brought on the greatest revolution in things." [Bouwsma, p. 283]

In religion, Sarpi and his right-hand man, Fulgenzio Micanzio, were very much Spirituali on the *ex sola fede* line of justification. A papal nuncio assigned to surveil the two wrote that Fulgenzio "greatly exalts faith in the blood of Christ and the grace of God for our salvation, and leaves out or rarely refers to works." [Bouwsma, p. 498]

Sarpi sounds very much like Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, and Hume. This is no surprise, since Sarpi and Micanzio were in close contact with Hobbes and Bacon, sometimes directly, and sometimes through the intermediary of William Cavendish, Earl of Devonshire, a friend of Francis Bacon and the employer of Thomas Hobbes. Bacon was of course a raving irrationalist, a Venetian-style Rosicrucian, and a bugger. Cavendish may have introduced Bacon to Hobbes, who soon became a couple. In Chatsworth House in Cornwall there is a manuscript entitled "Hobbes' Translations of Italian Letters," containing 77 missives from Micanzio to the Earl (called "Candiscio"). According to Dudley Carleton, Cavendish visited Venice and Padova in September 1614, accompanied by Hobbes. At that time meetings with Sarpi and Micanzio would have been on the agenda. [De Mas, p. 155]

**VENICE AND ENGLAND**

The contacts between Venice and England during the period around 1600 were so dense as to constitute an "Anglo-Venetian coalition," as Enrico De Mas asserts. The son of the Venetian agent William Cecil (Bacon's uncle) was Robert Cecil, who visited Venice shortly after 1600. Bacon himself was attorney general and lord chancellor for King James I. English ambassadors like Dudley Carleton and Sir Henry Wotton were also important intermediaries. Bacon was also in frequent contact by letter with the Venetian senator and patrician Domenico Molino. Bacon knew Italian because his mother had been active as the translator of the writings of Italian heretics. [De Mas, p. 156] Fulgenzio Micanzio was literary agent for Bacon in Venice, arranging for the translation and publication of his writings. One letter in Latin from Bacon to Micanzio has been located; here Bacon discusses a plan for a Latin edition of his complete works. Another translator of Bacon was the Archbishop of Spalato and Venetian agent Marcantonio de Dominis, who turned against Rome and stayed for some time as an honored guest of the English court before returning to Rome. There was a Bacon cult among the Venetian nobility in those years, and Venice led all Italian cities in the number of editions of Bacon's works.

As for Sarpi, his "History of the Council of Trent" was first published in English in London in an edition dedicated to King James I, and translated by Nathaniel Brent.

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, Spain was showing signs of economic decline, and was attempting to retrench on her military commitments. Spain made peace with France in 1598, with England in 1604, and, after decades of warfare, began to negotiate with the Dutch. Spain also started peace talks with the Ottoman Empire. The Venice of the Giovani was horrified by the apparent winding down of the wars of religion. Especially the Spanish truce with the Dutch was viewed with alarm by the Venetians, since this would free up veteran Spanish troops who could be used in a war against Venice. After taking over Venice in 1582, the Giovani had favored a more aggressive policy against the papacy and the Hapsburgs. After 1600, Venice passed laws that made it harder for the church to own Venetian land and dispose of it; this was followed by the arrest of two priests by the civil authorities. Pope Paul V Borghese responded on profile by declaring Venice under the papal interdict, which remained in force for almost a year, well into 1607.

The use of the papal interdict against a nominally Catholic country caused a sensation in the Protestant world, where tremendous sympathy for Venice was generated by an avalanche of propaganda writings, above all those of Sarpi himself. The Jesuit Bellarmine and others wrote for the papacy in this pamphlet war. Bellarmine puffed the pope as the *arbiter mundi*, the court of last resort in world affairs. Sarpi, who was an official of the Venetian regime, soon became the idol of the libertines and freethinkers everywhere, and was soon one of the most famous and most controversial persons in Europe. In the end, the Vatican was obliged to remove the interdict without securing any expression of penitence or regret; the Venetian government released the two clerics to a French cardinal who had undertaken a mediation, and the French gave the clerics back to the pope. Lutherans and Calvinists cheered Venice, which appeared to have checked the inexorable advance of the Counter-Reformation. Much was made of national sovereignty, which the Venetians said they were defending against the pope in the name of all nations.

**VENICE AND JAMES I**

French Gallicans and Huguenots, and Swiss and Dutch Calvinists were for Venice, but none supported Venice more than the degenerate King of England, James I. James was the pedantic pederast who claimed that he got his divine right directly from God, and not by way of the pope. James was delighted with Sarpi's arguments, and with their seeming victory. Venice, by asserting an independent Catholic Church under state control during the interdict, also appeared to be following the example of Henry VIII and the Anglican (or Anglo-Catholic) Church.

Sir Henry Wotton advanced the idea of a Protestant alliance encompassing England, Venice, the Grisons (the Graubuenden or Gray league of the Valtellina region in the Swiss Alps, sought by Spain as a land route between Austria and Milan), Holland, and the Protestant princes of Germany. The former Calvinist King Henry IV of France might be won for such a league, some thought. The Doge Leonardo Dona of the Giovani group even threatened indirectly to lead Venice into apostasy and heresy. "You must warn the Pope not to drive us into despair," he told the papal nuncio, "because we would then act like desperate men!" Sir Henry Wotton took this literally, and included in his alliance proposals plans to get Venice to go Protestant. He forwarded this to London where it was marked in the margin "The Project of Venice, 1608" by Robert Cecil. This was the Cecil who, as David Cherry has shown, staged Guy Fawkes' Gunpowder Plot, an alleged Catholic attempt to blow up the king and the Houses of Parliament, in order to guarantee that James would be suitably hostile to Rome and Spain. The project included a plan for James to become the supreme commander of the Protestant world in a war against the pope. This was clearly a line that Sarpi and company sought to feed to the megalomaniac James I. As part of the scheme, Charles Diodati, one of the Italian Spirituali who had fled to Geneva, was brought to Venice to preach. But later Sarpi and the Venetians found reason to be bitterly disappointed with the refusal of James I and Charles I massively to intervene on the European continent.

During this period, according to one account, an emissary of the Elector of the Palatinate reported that he had been taken by the English ambassador to Venice to visit a Calvinist Congregation of more than 1,000 people in Venice, including 300 of the top patricians, of which Sarpi was the leader. Sarpi invited the German Protestants to come to the aid of Venice in case of war, for in defending Venetian territory they would be helping the Protestant cause as well. ["Scelte Lettere Inedite di Fra Paolo Sarpi," Capolago, Canton Ticino: Tipografia e Libreria Elvetica, 1833, pp. cxi-cxii]

**THE ROOTS OF WAR**

In reality, the Venetians used the conflict around the Interdict to inflame the religious passions of Europe so as to set the stage for a revival of the wars of religion. The seventeenth century would thus repeat the hecatomb of the sixteenth on an even vaster scale. The Venetian gambit of a clash with the Vatican set the stage for the Thirty Years' War.

The grand design Sarpi peddled to Protestants called for an apocalyptic war between Catholics and Protestants with the latter led by James I and the Dutch United Provinces. In a battle between Venice and the papal states, foreign Protestant armies would fight on Venetian soil, making possible the religious conversion of the terra ferma (Bergamo, Brescia, Verona, Vicenza, etc.) to some sort of Calvinism. [Cozzi, pp. 265-68] At a deeper level, Venice wanted a catastrophic general war in Europe from which Venice could hold aloof, thus surviving at least until the process of the metastasis of the fondi into northern Europe could be completed - until the time, say, of the founding of the Bank of England at the end of the 1600s. Beyond that, the oligarchs would seek to preserve the Rialto as a cultural and ideological center. But the survival of the withered mummy of Venice for a century or two would be possible only if all the other European powers were thoroughly devastated.

It is remarkable to observe how many of the key protagonists who detonated the Thirty Years' War can be identified as Venetian agents.

During the Interdict battle, Sarpi's intelligence agencies went into action to create the preconditions for such a war, not in Italy, but beyond the Alps in Germany. The first step was to organize Germany into two armed camps, similar to the pre-1914 or post-1945 European military blocs. First came the creation of the Protestant Union of 1608, helped by the crushing of the free city of Donauwoerth by the counter- reformation under Maximilian I of Bavaria. The Protestant Union was organized by Prince Christian of Anhalt, the senior advisor to the Elector Palatine. Christian of Anhalt was a vital node of Paolo Sarpi's network, and in the 1870's the Archives of the German city of Bernberg contained a correspondence between Christian and Sarpi. [Julius Krebs, p. 45]

When Christian von Anhalt created the Protestant Union, he sent one Christoph von Dona (or Dohna) to talk to Sarpi in Venice about the entry of Venice into this alliance. Christoph von Dona and his brother Achatius von Dona kept up a correspondence with Paolo Sarpi in their own right [Cozzi, p. 245, 258]. In August 1608, Christoph von Dona met with Sarpi in Venice, and Sarpi told Dona about the measures taken by the Giovani in 1582 to "correct" the functions of the Council of Ten and its subcommittee of three (Zonta), which up until that time had constituted a factional stronghold of the adversaries of the Giovani, who were called the Vecchi (old) and who favored a more conciliatory line towards Spain and the papacy. The Ten had been accused, Sarpi told Christoph von Dona, of being arrogant, and of usurping the main functions of the government, including foreign policy, from the senate, or Pregadi.

The Venetian diplomatic corps was mobilized to exploit the Interdict to create the Protestant Union. The papal nuncio in Paris reported on March 3, 1609 to Pope Paul V on the activities of the Venetian ambassador, Antonio Foscarini, a close associate of Sarpi: "From the first day that he came here, he has always comported himself in the same way: His most confidential dealings are with the agents of various German Protestants, with the Dutch, with the English ambassador and with two or three French Huguenots, who can be considered his house guests. His business has been to attempt to impede in any way possible any peace or truce in Flanders.... In addition to these fine projects, he has been in a big rush to set up this league of Protestants in Germany, and although he has not been able to do much in this direction, in any case I am sure that if he can contribute to this, he'll do it." [Federico Seneca, "La Politica Veneziana Dopo L'Interdetto," Padova, 1957., pp. 21-22]

Within a year of the creation of the Protestant Union in 1608, a Catholic League was formed under the aegis of Maximilian of Bavaria with Spanish support. The conflagration was set.

Academic accounts of the Thirty Years' War often stress the conflict over the succession in Juelich-Cleves (around Duesseldorf) after 1609, which embroiled the Dutch and the Protestants against the imperial Catholics. Some accounts portray Henry IV of France as eager to attack the Hapsburgs in Milan and on the Rhine during 1610, just before Henry IV was assassinated by the alleged Catholic fanatic Ravaillac, who accused Henry IV of being a threat to the Catholic Church. According to other accounts, Henry IV "had decided to reveal to the pope and to the Venetian Republic what was being plotted in Venice by Sarpi, or at least by those who were moving around him." [Cozzi, p. 257]

From Venice, Giovanni Diodati wrote to his friend Philippe Duplessis Mornay telling him of the "petite eglise reformee" (small reformed church) there. Diodati added that "the English minister and ambassador [William Bedell, Wotton's secretary] has been very helpful." This letter was intercepted by Henry IV of France, who passed it to the papal nuncio, who sent it on to Rome and to the Venetian government. Sarpi was soon aware of what had happened. Writing to Christoph von Dohna on 29 September 1608, Sarpi complained, "The King of France has written that Venice is in favor of religion, and he has played a very bad role." "How did it happen that that great principle was put to sleep?" he wrote to another correspondent that summer, referring to the French mediation of the Interdict crisis; "That is also the reason why it is impossible to incite others." [Cozzi, p. 259]

Sarpi's animus against Henry IV suggests that the superficial explanation of Henry's assassination in 1610 may not be the correct one. In any case, Henry's death increased the tensions among the German Protestant leaders, since they had now been deprived of their protector. Henry's death meant that France, a power Venice ultimately hated and feared just as much as Spain, would be plunged again into the internal conflicts epitomized by the St. Bartholomew's massacre of 20,000 Huguenots in 1572; Pope Gregory XIII had called those killings "more agreeable than fifty Lepantos." [R.R. Palmer, p. 106] In the 1600s this civil strife was called the Fronde, and it would be decades before the Fronde was suppressed to the point that France was capable of international action once again.

**THE THIRTY YEARS' WAR**

In 1615, the Venetians started a border war with Austria, called the Guerra Arciducale. This was the signal that something big was coming. The Austrian Hapsburgs, in order to defend their frontier with the Ottoman Empire, employed a force of refugees from the Balkans called uzkoks (the Serbian word for refugees). Uzkoks settled in Segna and some other ports of the eastern Adriatic where they operated as corsairs against Turkish shipping, and also against the Venetians. The uzkoks, through their depredations and through the cost of measures undertaken against them, were depleting the Venetian treasury. So in December 1615, Venetian land forces crossed the Isonzo River and laid siege to Gradisca. Count John Ernest of Nassau- Siegen raised forces totaling 5,000 men in the Dutch Republic to assist the Venetians; ten English and twelve Dutch warships maintained a blockade of the Adriatic against any ships from Spain or Naples which might have sought to aid their Austrian Hapsburg allies. But Spanish forces did reach the front, forcing the Venetians to accept a negotiated peace.

A recent study highlights the significance of this Venetian-staged conflict in the runup to the general conflagration: "The uzkok war was one of the more bizarre episodes of the earlier seventeenth century, yet it offered an alarming example of how a minor political conflict in a remote corner of Europe could threaten to engulf the whole continent with war.... The uzkok war, although apparently minor, was important because it brought a general European conflict perceptibly nearer. On the diplomatic plane, it cemented or occasioned alliances that favored aggression." [ Parker, pp. 40, 42]

In the spring of 1618, executions in Venice were attributed to the discovery by the Council of Ten of an alleged Spanish plot to overthrow the Venetian regime. Some skeptical historians consider that this was a cover story for a Venetian intrigue in which the Spanish governor of Naples, Osuna, was to declare himself independent under Venetian auspices. [Carl J. Friedrichs, p. 151]

The immediate detonator for the Thirty Years' War is usually considered to be the revolt of the Bohemian nobles against the new Hapsburg Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II, who was also the King of Bohemia. Under Rudolph II, the previous emperor, the Bohemian nobles had been granted the Letter of Majesty of 1609 which guaranteed them their religious self-determination (ignoring the cuius regio eius religio) and the right to elect their own king. The Bohemians, many of whom were Calvinists, Hussites, and Utraquists, feared that Ferdinand would introduce the militant Counter- Reformation into Bohemia. There followed the celebrated defenestration of Prague of 1618, in which two representatives of Ferdinand were thrown out of the window by a group of Bohemian nobles organized by the Count of Thurn. When Ferdinand sent troops to restore his authority, the Bohemian nobles deposed him and decided to elect a new king. They chose Frederick V, the Elector Palatine, who had his court in Heidelberg, and who, as we have seen, counted Christian von Anhalt and Christoph von Dona among his most trusted advisers. When the Electoral Palatine, now styling himself King Frederick of Bohemia, was routed at the battle of the White Mountain in 1620, he went into the history books as the "unlucky Winter King." Let us attempt further to reveal the fine Venetian hand behind these events, which are the opening rounds of the Thirty Years' War.

The key figure among the Bohemians is the Count Heinrich Mathias of Thurn-Valsassina (1567-1633). This is the senior branch of the family, originally from Venetian territory, which is otherwise known as della Torre, Torre e Tasso, and later as Thurn und Taxis. Thurn's parents had become Protestants, but he entered the imperial army and fought during a campaign against the Ottoman Empire. As a reward he had gotten the important post of Burggraf of Marlstein in Bohemia. Here Thurn built a base among the local nobility, including especially the branch of the Hussites known as the Utraquists. His announced program was the maintenance of Bohemian liberties for these nobles. Heinrich Mathias von Thurn demanded and got the Letter of Majesty, which soon turned into the apple of Bohemian discord. He was named to a special committee of 30 Defenders of the Faith in Prague. He was vehemently opposed to the election of Ferdinand as Holy Roman Emperor, and Ferdinand responded by attempting to oust Thurn as Burggraf, within the framework of other anti-Protestant measures. Thurn then incited the Bohemians to rebel, and this led directly to the defenestration of Prague of May 23, 1618. In the face of Ferdinand's military response, Thurn was made the commander of the Bohemian armed forces. He had captured some of the suburbs of Vienna when he was forced to retreat. During the campaign leading up to the rout at the White Mountain, Thurn was constantly disputing with the Palatine Elector's generals about who was in command. After the rout, he made his career as a general in later phases of the war. [Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich, XLV, pp. 104-06]

Finally, let us look at Frederick V the Elector Palatine himself. The future Winter King, a Calvinist, had married Elizabeth, the daughter of King James I of England, and the English presence at the Palatine court in Heidelberg was associated with the same sorts of cultist kookery we have observed in the cases of Zorzi and Bacon. Rosicrucians in particular were heavily present at the electoral Palatine court. One of them was the English irrationalist and freemason Robert Fludd, whose lengthy treatise on universal harmony, the "Utriusque cosmi historia" was published on the Palatine city of Oppenheim in 1617-19. During the course of the Thirty Years' War, after Frederick had been deposed by the Catholic forces, parts of the Heidelberg library, the Bibliotheca Palatina, were confiscated by the Inquisition and moved to Rome. [Yates, pp. 169-171] Frederick was not the only one infected by the Rosicrucian bacillus in these years in which the saga of "Christian Rosenkreuz" first appeared in Germany. One of Fludd's friends was a certain German Rosicrucian alchemist named Michael Maier, who was reputed to be close to the Hapsburg Emperor Rudolph II. [See Serge Hutin, "Histoire des Rose-Croix," p. 125]

Such Venetian-Rosicrucian irrationalism may provide the key to the Winter King's legendary mental lability and failures of strategic planning. We must also remember that the Elector was constantly controlled and advised by Sarpi's friends Christian von Anhalt and Christoph von Dona. Christian was notorious for his adventurism and brinksmanship; one German account of these events speaks of "Anhalt's crazy plans" [ADB]; these included the ambitious project of wiping out the House of Hapsburg and making Frederick Holy Roman Emperor, a thoroughly utopian undertaking. Frederick V was encouraged to believe that with the aid of a few troops from Venetian-allied Savoy, plus the Bohemians, and support from a few other German states, he could break the Spanish- Austrian- Catholic hold on central Europe.

In August-September 1619, Frederick vacillated over whether or not to accept the Bohemian crown offered to him by Thurn and his cohorts. Bohemia was prime Hapsburg territory, and it was clear that Frederick could not keep Prague without some serious fighting. Some advisers wrote position papers for Frederick warning him not to take the crown, saying that "acceptance would begin a general religious war." [Parker, p. 55] But Christian von Anhalt and his friend Camerarius answered that such a war was inevitable anyway as soon as the twelve years' truce between the Spanish and the Dutch ran out. The Sarpi networks were fully mobilized; Dudley Carleton, the Anglo- Venetian representative of James I in the Hague, wrote in September 1619 that "this business in Bohemia is like to put all Christendom into combustion."

Frederick accepted the Bohemian crown, rushed to Prague, and then found himself in a hopelessly exposed position. After the White Mountain, he never stopped retreating; he failed to rally the Palatinate for a war of self-defense, and was permanently ousted. The death of Gustavus Adolphus some years later closed the books on Frederick V's hopes of being restored in the Palatinate.

The Thirty Years' War, which extirpated about half of the population of Germany between 1618 and 1648, is thus exposed as a piece of utopian- geopolitical tinkering from the satanic cell around Fra Paolo Sarpi.

**MORE ON BACON**

Even after he was ousted from all his court posts in the wake of confessed bribery and corruption, Francis Bacon remained a loyal Venetian agent. In about 1624, Bacon addressed a memorandum to the new King Charles I in which he urged that England declare war on Spain in order to help restore the Elector Palatine (and Charles's sister) in Heidelberg. The alliance proposed by Bacon was to include new variations on the usual Paoli Sarpi constellation: France, Navarre, Naples, Milan, Grisons, Savoy, Bavaria, the Protestant leader Gabor of Transylvania, and now even Persia, which was attempting to seize the straits of Hormuz. Bacon stressed the Venetian contribution: "It is within every man's observation also that Venice doth think their state almost unfixed if the Spaniards hold the Valtoline." [Bacon, Considerations Touching a War...]

Sarpi had many English admirers; one was Izaak Walton, the author of the famous "Compleat Angler." Another was John Milton, who had repeated praise for Fra Paolo. Milton called Sarpi "Padre Paolo the great unmasker of the Tridentine Council," "Padre Paolo the great Venetian antagonist of the Pope," and "the great and learned Padre Paolo." Indeed, a whole passage in Milton's famous "Areopagitica," the one dealing with the Council of Trent, closely follows Sarpi's account.

Ludwig Dehio and other historians have pointed out that the characteristic Venetian methods of strategy were also typical of the later English and British colonialism. It was the Venetian asset and architect of the English religious schism, Thomas Cromwell, who wrote, "this realm of England is an empire." Gaining strength under James I, the Venetian party acted out its imperialist impulse during the Stuart and Cromwell periods, and most obviously under the post-1688 oligarchical system. [See Graham Lowry, "How the Nation was Won"] Thus it is that the Venetian methods that were used deliberately to provoke the wars of religion of the sixteenth century, and later the Thirty Years' War itself, can be discerned in the global strategic commitments of today's British oligarchy tending to unleash a global cataclysm, a bellum omnium contra omnes (war of each against all) which no nation and no people could seriously hope to survive.

The ascendancy of Venice after 1200 was instrumental in precipitating the near-collapse of European civilization between about 1250 and 1400. Later, the combined effect of the Venice- sponsored Protestant Reformation and the Venice- sponsored Counter- Reformation was to visit upon Europe the renewed horrors of 1520-1648, to which the British historian Trevor-Roper has referred under the heading of the "little Dark Age." Today the shadows of another such nightmare epoch lengthen over the ruined economies, gutted cities and ethnic conflicts of the late twentieth century. Those wishing to survive must learn to defend themselves from the Anglo-Venetian hecatomb now looming.

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**END**

**HOW THE DEAD SOULS OF VENICE CORRUPTED SCIENCE**

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There is a cancer growing on world history - the cancer of oligarchism. Between 1200 A.D. and about 1600 A.D., the world center of gravity for the forces of oligarchism was the oligarchy of Venice. Toward the end of that time, the Venetian oligarchy decided for various reasons to transfer its families, fortunes, and characteristic outlook to a new base of operations, which turned out to be the British Isles. The old program of a worldwide new Roman Empire with its capital in Venice was replaced by the new program of a worldwide new Roman Empire with its capital in London - what eventually came to be known as the British Empire.

This was the metastasis of the cancer, the shift of the Venetian Party from the Adriatic to the banks of the Thames, and this has been the main project of the world oligarchy during the past five centuries. The Venetian Party, wherever it is, believes in epistemological warfare. The Venetian Party knows that ideas are more powerful weapons than guns, fleets, and bombs. In order to secure acceptance for their imperial ideas, the Venetian Party seeks to control the way people think. If you can control the way people think, say the Venetians, you can control the way they respond to events, no matter what those events may be. It is therefore vital to the Venetians to control philosophy and especially science, the area where human powers of hypothesis and creative reason become a force for improvements in the order of nature. The Venetian Party is implacably hostile to scientific discovery. Since the days of Aristotle, they have attempted to suffocate scientific discovery by using formalism and the fetishism of authoritative professional opinion. The Venetian Party has also created over the centuries a series of scientific frauds and hoaxes, which have been elevated to the status of incontrovertible and unchallengeable authorities. These have been used to usurp the rightful honor due to real scientists, whom the Venetians have done everything possible to destroy.

We can identify the Venetian faction which has been responsible for the most important of these scientific and epistemological frauds. They can be called the "dead souls" faction, or perhaps the "no-soul brothers" of Venetian intelligence. This is because their factional pedigree is based on the belief that human beings have no soul. Their factional creed is the idea that human beings have no creative mental powers, are incapable of forming hypotheses, and cannot make scientific discoveries.

**THREE GROUPS OF VENETIAN GAMEMASTERS**

We can approach these Venetian dead souls in three groups. First there is the group around Pietro Pomponazzi, Gasparo Contarini, and Francesco Zorzi, who were active in the first part of the 1500s. Second, there is the group of Paolo Sarpi and his right-hand man Fulgenzio Micanzio, the case officers for Galileo Galilei. This was the group that opposed Johannes Kepler in the early 1600s. Third, we have the group around Antonio Conti and Giammaria Ortes in the early 1700s. This was the group that created the Newton myth and modern materialism or utilitarianism and combated Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. These three groups of Venetian gamemasters are responsible for a great deal of the obscurantism and garbage that weighs like a nightmare on the brain of humanity today. These Venetian intelligence officials are the original atheists and materialists of the modern world, as reflected in the sympathy of Soviet writers for figures like Galileo, Newton, and Voltaire as ancestors of what was later called dialectical materialism.

The leading figure of the first grouping in the early 1500s was Gasparo Contarini. In other locations we have told the story of how Contarini, for Venetian raisons d'état, set into motion the Protestant Reformation, including Martin Luther, King Henry VIII of England, Jean Calvin of Geneva, and the Italian crypto-Protestants known as gli Spirituali. At the same time, Contarini was the cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church who masterminded the early phases of the Catholic Counter-Reformation. Contarini was the personal protector of Ignatius of Loyola, and played a decisive role in establishing the Jesuit Order. Contarini also convoked the Council of Trent on an Aristotelian platform.

It is with Pietro Pomponazzi that we see the explicit factional pedigree of the dead souls faction. Pomponazzi started from Aristotle, as the Venetian Party always does. Aristotle asserted that there is no thought which is not mixed with sense impressions. This meant that there is no part of our mental life which is not contaminated by matter. For Pomponazzi, this proved that the soul does not exist, since it has no immaterial substance. Contarini warned Pomponazzi not to take this matter any further, but also remarked that the only time that the existence of the soul is really certain is when the person is already dead. For Contarini, as a practical matter, there is no empirical human soul that you can be aware of while you are still alive.

Francesco Zorzi was the envoy of this group to Henry VIII, to whom he became the resident sex adviser. Zorzi illustrates the typical profile of a Venetian intelligence operative in the early 1500s: He was a Franciscan friar whose main occupation was black magic of the Rosicrucian variety. He was a conjurer, a necromancer, an apparitionist. Think of Christopher Marlowe's Doctor Faustus, and you have the portrait of Zorzi. Not exactly a role model for science nerds of any age. As the 1500s turned into the 1600s, this profile began to present serious drawbacks and limitations.

**SARPI AND GALILEO**

Until about 1600, the posture of the Venetian Party toward science was one of more or less open hostility, favoring black magic. But in the early 1600s, the group around Sarpi succeeded in changing their public profile from being the enemies of science to being the embodiment of the most advanced and sophisticated science. For several centuries after this, the Venetians would work inside the scientific community to take it over. They would claim to represent the highest expression of scientific values. In this way, they could institutionalize the dead hand of formalism and the fetishism of authority, so as to stifle the process of discovery.

The chief of Venetian intelligence who made this possible was Paolo Sarpi. Sarpi and his friend Fulgenzio Micanzio were Servite monks. Sarpi was part of an important Venetian salon of the day, the Ridotti Morosini, which met for discussions in the palace of the Morosini family on the Grand Canal. The Morosini were the direct ideological heirs of Gasparo Contarini. The Morosini salon centered on a discussion of science, and it became the nucleus for the youthful faction of the Venetian oligarchy, the so-called Giovani, who became powerful after 1582. The Giovani favored a policy of cooperation with Holland, England, and France in conflicts with the Austrian and Spanish Hapsburgs and the papacy. The Vecchi, the oldies, serviced the Venetian networks on the Spanish and papal side, which were also quite extensive.

We have told in other locations how Sarpi organized and unleashed the Thirty Years' War in Central Europe, using agents like Max von Thurn und Taxis, Christian von Anhalt, Christoph von Dona, and the Elector Palatine Frederick, the so-called Winter King. In this sense, Paolo Sarpi personally exterminated about one-third of the entire population of Europe, and about one-half of the population of Germany and surrounding areas. Sarpi also caused the assassination of King Henry IV of France when Henry opposed Sarpi's designs and exposed him as an atheist. Paolo Sarpi, we see, is a worthy predecessor to Bertrand Russell.

But Sarpi in his own time was considered an eminent mathematician. One contemporary wrote of him: "...I can say about him without any exaggeration whatsoever that no one in Europe excels him in the knowledge of [mathematical] sciences." This is the view of Sarpi held by Galileo Galilei.

Sarpi's companions at the Ridotto Morosini during the 1590s included the influential mystic Giordano Bruno. Starting in 1592, there was also a professor of mathematics at the nearby University of Padua: Galileo Galilei, a native of Florence. Galileo taught mathematics in Padua from 1592 to 1610, and it was during his stay on Venetian territory that he became a celebrity. Galileo was a paid agent of Sarpi and, after Sarpi's death, of Sarpi's right-hand man Micanzio. There is a correspondence on scientific subjects between Sarpi and Galileo, including on magnetism, which was Sarpi's favorite, because he found it occult. Galileo proposed some of his first ideas on falling bodies to Sarpi, who enthused that Galileo had been born to solve the question of motion.

Galileo's fame was procured when he used a small telescope to observe the moons of Jupiter, the rings of Saturn, and the phases of Venus. He reported these sightings in his essay The Starry Messenger, which instantly made him the premier scientist in Europe and thus a very important agent of influence for the Venetian Party. This entire telescope operation had been devised by Paolo Sarpi.

The first telescope had been built by Leonardo da Vinci about a hundred years before Galileo. Susan Welsh has called attention to the research of Domenico Argentieri on Leonardo's optical manuscripts, which demonstrates that Leonardo's telescope had a convex lens at one end and a concave lens at the other. Its magnifying power was rather weak, but it was a telescope. There are reports of a telescope made in Italy in 1590. By 1608, telescopes began to turn up in Holland, and Galileo says he was encouraged by reports of them to build his own telescope in 1609.

Sarpi's version of these events is more revealing. He wrote on March 16, 1610 that a telescope had been found in Holland two years before, therefore in spring 1608. "Once this was found," wrote Sarpi, "our mathematician of Padua [Galileo] and some of our other people who are not ignorant of these arts began to use the telescope on celestial bodies, adjusting it and refining it for the purpose...." Notice: Galileo "and some of our other people." It would appear that the observations were made not from Padua, but from Paolo Sarpi's Servite monastery in Venice. Sarpi wrote about Galileo as "our mathematician," saying that he had "frequently discussed with him at the time" about the results of the telescopic observations, and did not need to read what Galileo had written about them.

In 1611, a Polish visitor to Venice, Rey, wrote that Galileo had not really been the inventor of the telescope, but that the "adviser, author, and director" of the telescope project had been Father Paolo Sarpi, "who is considered the greatest mathematician here."

In 1597, Johannes Kepler had sent a copy of his new book, Mysterium Cosmographicum, to Galileo. This was the work in which Kepler proposed the Platonic solids as the basis for understanding the harmonic ordering of the planetary orbits around the Sun. Galileo thereupon sent a letter to Kepler, explaining that he, too, was a follower of the Copernican or heliocentric view, but that he "had not dared" to come forward with this view because of fear, and preferred to sit on the whole business because of the climate of opinion. Kepler had written back urging Galileo to be confident and to go forward with the struggle for truth, offering to find publishers in Germany if the Italian climate were too oppressive. Galileo did not do this, and refused to comment in detail on Kepler's book. According to Kepler's biographer Max Caspar, in the following years Galileo used material from Kepler in his lectures, but without giving Kepler credit.

Kepler and Galileo were in frequent contact for over 30 years. Kepler commented with benevolent interest - and with subtle polemics - about Galileo's published works. But Galileo never commented systematically on Kepler's laws. In 1609, Kepler published his Astronomia Nova, expounding his first and second laws of planetary motion - that the planets move in ellipses of which the Sun is one focus, and that the planets sweep out equal areas in equal times between themselves and the Sun as they revolve. In Galileo's Dialogues on the Two Great World Systems, published in 1533, Kepler is hardly mentioned, while the discussion centers on Copernicus, with his perfect circle orbits of the planets around the Sun, which had no hope of accounting for the observed positions of the planets. At the end, one of the characters says that he is surprised at Kepler for being so "puerile" as to attribute the tides to the attraction of the Moon.

During the first years of the pontificate of Pope Urban VIII Barberini, Galileo was the semi-official scientist for the pope. But in 1631, when the Swedish Protestant army of Gustavus Adolphus fought its way through Germany, reached the Alps, and seemed ready to sweep down on Rome, Urban VIII turned abruptly from a pro-French to a pro-Spanish policy. The Spanish ascendancy is the backdrop for the trial of Galileo carried out by the Dominicans with Jesuit support. Some years earlier, Sarpi had forecast that if Galileo went to Rome, the Jesuits and others were likely to "turn ... the question of physics and astronomy into a theological question," so as to condemn Galileo as "an excommunicated heretic" and force him to "recant all his views on this subject." Sarpi in 1616 seemed to know very well what would happen more than 15 years later, well after his own death. It is evident that the scenario sketched here corresponded to Sarpi's own long-term plan. For Galileo, the trial was one of the greatest public relations successes of all time. The gesture of repression against Galileo carried out by the Dominicans of Santa Maria Sopra Minerva in Rome established the equation Galileo=modern experimental science struggling against benighted obscurantism. That equation has stood ever since, and this tragic misunderstanding has had terrible consequences for human thought. Lost in the brouhaha about Galileo is the more relevant fact that Kepler had been condemned by the Inquisition more than a decade before.

Sarpi's philosophical and scientific writings were not published until after World War II. These are the Pensieri, or Thoughts, and the Arte di Ben Pensare, the Art of Thinking Well. Sarpi's achievement for Venetian intelligence was to abstract the *method* of Aristotle from the mass of opinions expressed by Aristotle on this or that particular issue. In this way, sense certainty could be kept as the basis of scientific experiments, and Aristotle's embarrassingly outdated views on certain natural phenomena could be jettisoned. This allowed the Venetians to preserve the essential Aristotle, while attacking exponents of the Aristotelian or Peripatetic school, such as the Jesuits of the Collegio Romano. These writings by Sarpi have not been translated, but they are the basis of everything written by Sir Francis Bacon. The Bacon-Hobbes menage was in close contact with Sarpi and Micanzio. Sarpi can also be found in Locke, who took almost 1,000 pages to write what Sarpi had put down in 30.

In the Art of Thinking Well, Sarpi starts from sense perception and sense certainty. He suggests that an impression made on our sensory apparatus by outside objects has to be distinguished from those objects. Especially he points to tastes, odors, and sounds, which he thinks are a matter of our nervous system, not of outside reality. In a different category are ideas of quantity, size, and time, which are objective. In the same manuscript, Sarpi lists the immortality of the soul as one on a list of wrong ideas. Sarpi repeats the argument of Pomponazzi that since there is no knowledge without sensation, the soul dies with the body. Again, the trademark of the Venetian dead souls faction.

Galileo's epistemology comes straight from Sarpi. We can see this in Galileo's 1623 essay Il Saggiatore, The Assayer. For Galileo, colors, tastes, sounds, smells, are mere words. They exist only for our bodies. Galileo makes the famous comparison of these to tickling. If you brush a feather over the soles of the feet or the armpits of a marble statue, you will not produce a tickle. But if you do this to a human being, you will cause that tickling sensation. So, Galileo says, it is time to get rid of ears, tongues, and noses, and go for shapes, numbers, and motions, and never odors, tastes, and sounds. From this he proceeds quickly to a reductionist theory of atoms, in which heat is explained as the effect a "fiery minims" of igneous atoms. Galileo's epistemology is identical with that of Sarpi. This is what Galileo means when he denies Aristotle to say that the truth is written in the book of nature, and written in mathematical characters. Galileo was a reductionist.

Sarpi died in 1623, and Galileo's case officer became the Servite monk Fulgenzio Micanzio. After Galileo had been condemned, Micanzio reminded Galileo of the assignment he had received from Sarpi 20 years earlier: to write a treatise on motion. And by the way, added Micanzio, I have 258 pounds here for you. Later, Micanzio would procure Galileo a pension of 60 scudi per year from the coffers of the Venetian state.

Galileo responded to Micanzio's orders with the 1638 Discourses on Two New Sciences, Mechanics and Local Motion. Because Galileo had been condemned by the Inquisition, he could not be published anywhere that papal authority was strong. Micanzio therefore arranged for Galileo's book to be printed by the Dutch Elsevir press in Leyden.

In 1634, Micanzio wrote to Galileo that he had been talking to an expert in science and philosophy - called a virtuoso in the parlance of the day - who had commented that although he did not deny Galileo's scientific ability, "the things that you bring are not new, but are already in Kepler." Indeed. Galileo wrote back that the correct answer to this virtuoso is that although Galileo and Kepler may sometimes seem to agree about certain astronomical phenomena, "my way of philosophizing is so different from his." (Nov. 19, 1634).

In letters written in 1640, Galileo threw further light on his own scientific method. Galileo complained that he had been misunderstood: "Against all the reason in the world, I am accused of impugning Peripatetic doctrine, whereas I profess and am certain of observing more religiously the Peripatetic - or, to put it better, Aristotelian - teachings than many others...." (Aug. 24, 1640). Galileo asserted that he had tried to study phenomena: "that in all natural effects assure me of their existence, their "an sit" [if it be], whereas I gain nothing from their how, their "quomodo." (June 23, 1640). Some might try to dismiss these admissions as a distortion of Galileo's outlook caused by the crackdown of which he was still a victim, but I would submit that this is the real Galileo talking. What Galileo is trying to express here is the same thing Isaac Newton meant with his infamous "hypotheses non fingo" [I do not fabricate hypotheses]. Which brings us to Newton.

**NEWTON: A CULTIST KOOK**

The next phase of the corruption of science by Venice depends on a rather obscure Cambridge don by the name of Isaac Newton. For the oligarchy, Newton and Galileo are the only two contenders for the honor of being the most influential thinker of their faction since Aristotle himself. The British oligarchy praises Newton as the founder of modern science. But, at the same time, they have been unable to keep secret the fact that Newton was a raving irrationalist, a cultist kook. Among the oligarchs, it was the British economist Lord John Maynard Keynes and a fellow Cambridge graduate who began to open the black box of Newton's real character. Was Newton the first and greatest of the modern scientists, the practitioner of cold and untinctured reason? No, said Keynes, Newton was not the first of the Age of Reason. He was the last of the magicians, the last of the Babylonians and Sumerians, the last wonderful child to whom the Magi could do sincere and appropriate homage. Keynes based his view on the contents of a box. What was in the box? The box contained papers which Newton had packed up when he left Cambridge for London in 1696, ending his Cambridge career and beginning his new life in London as member and president of the British Royal Society, director of the mint, resident magus of the new British Empire.

Inside the box were manuscripts and papers totaling some 1.2 million words. After Newton's death, Bishop Horsley was asked to inspect the box, with a view to publication, but when he saw the contents, he recoiled in horror and slammed the lid. A century passed. Newton's nineteenth-century biographer, Sir David Brewster, looked into the box. He decided to save Newton's reputation by printing a few selections, but he falsified the rest with straight fibbing, as Keynes says. The box became known as the Portsmouth Papers. A few mathematical papers were given to Cambridge in 1888. In 1936, the current owner, Lord Lymington, needed money, so he had the rest auctioned off. Keynes bought as many as he could, but other papers were scattered from Jerusalem to America.

As Keynes points out, Newton was a suspicious, paranoid, unstable personality. In 1692, Newton had a nervous breakdown and never regained his former consistency of mind. Pepys and Locke thought that he had become deranged. Newton emerged from his breakdown slightly "gaga." As Keynes stresses, Newton "was wholly aloof from women," although he had some close young male friends. He once angrily accused John Locke of trying to embroil him with women.

In the past decades, the lid of the box has been partially and grudgingly opened by the Anglophile scholars who are the keepers of the Newton myth. What can we see inside the box?

First, Newton was a supporter of the Arian heresy. He denied and attacked the Holy Trinity, and therefore also the Filioque and the concept of Imago Viva Dei. Keynes thought that Newton was "a Judaic monotheist of the school of Maimonides," which suggests that he was a Cabalist. For Newton, to worship Christ as God was idolatry and a mortal sin. Even in the Church of England, Newton had to keep these views secret or face ostracism.

**ALCHEMY AND GREEN LIONS**

Newton's real interest was not mathematics or astronomy. It was alchemy. His laboratory at Trinity College, Cambridge was fitted out for alchemy. Here, his friends said, the fires never went out during six weeks of the spring and six weeks of the autumn. And what is alchemy? What kind of research was Newton doing? His sources were books like the "Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum" of Elias Ashmole, the Rosicrucian leader of British speculative Freemasonry. Newton owned all six heavy quarto volumes of Ashmole.

The goal of the alchemists was the quest for the mythical philosopher's stone, which would permit the alchemist to transmute lead and other base metals into gold. The alchemists hoped the philosopher's stone would give them other magical powers, such as rejuvenation and eternal youth.

Alchemy also involved the relations between the astrological influences of the planets and the behavior of chemicals. One treatise that dealt with these issues was the "Metamorphosis of the Planets." Since the planet Jupiter had precedence among the planets, it also occupied a privileged position among the reagents of alchemy. Newton expressed this with a picture he drew of Jupiter Enthroned on the obverse of the title page of this book.

What were Newton's findings? Let him speak for himself: "Concerning Magnesia of the green Lion. It is called Prometheus & the Chameleon. Also Androgyne, and virgin verdant earth in which the Sun has never cast its rays although he is its father and the moon its mother. Also common mercury, dew of heaven which makes the earth fertile, nitre of the wise. Instructio de arbore solari. It is the Saturnine stone." This would appear to have been written in the 1670s. A sample from the 1690s: "Now this green earth is the Green Ladies of B. Valentine the beautifully green Venus and the green Venereal emerald and green earth of Snyders with which he fed his lunary Mercury and by virtue of which Diana was to bring forth children and out of which saith Ripley the blood of the green Lyon is drawn in the beginning of the work."

During the 1680s Newton also composed a series of aphorisms of alchemy, the sixth of which reads as follows: "The young new born king is nourished in a bigger heat with milk drawn by destellation from the putrefied matter of the second work. With this milk he must be imbibed seven times to putrefy him sufficiently and then dococted to the white and red, and in passing to the red he must be imbibed with a little red oil to fortify the solary nature and make the red stone more fluxible. And this may be called the third work. The first goes on no further than to putrefaction, the second goes to the white and the third to the red." (Westfall, pp. 292, 293, 358).

And so it goes for more than a million words, with Green Lions, Androgynes, male and female principles, Pan and Osiris. Truly it has been said that Newton had probed the literature of alchemy as it had never been probed before or since, all during the time he was supposedly writing his Principia Mathematica. In addition, he drew up plans for King Solomon's Temple, and later a chronology of Biblical events which foreshortened that history by cutting out several hundred years.

**NEWTON'S "DISCOVERIES"**

And what about Newton's supposed discoveries? Upon closer scrutiny, it turns out that he had no discoveries. Take, for example, Newton's alleged law of universal gravitation, which states that the force of attraction of two point masses is equal to the product of the two masses divided by the square of the distance between them, times a constant. This is Newton's so-called inverse square law. It has long been known that this was not really a new discovery, but rather derived by some tinkering from Kepler's Third Law. Kepler had established that the cube of a planet's distance from the Sun divided by the square of its year always equaled a constant. By supplementing this with Huygens's formula for centrifugal acceleration and making some substitutions, you can obtain the inverse square relationship. This issue is settled in the appendices to The Science of Christian Economy [by Lyndon LaRouche, Washington, D.C.: Schiller Institute, 1991]. But the partisans of Newton still claim that Newton explained gravity.

By opening the lid of the box, we find that Newton himself confesses, in an unpublished note, that his great achievement was cribbed from Kepler. Newton wrote: "...I began to think of gravity extending to the Orb of the Moon and (having found out how to estimate the force with which a globe revolving presses the surface of a sphere) from Kepler's rule of the periodical times of the Planets being in sesquialterate proportion of their distances from the center of their Orbs, I deduced that the forces which keep the Planets in their Orbs must be reciprocally as the squares of their distances from the centers about which they revolve...." (Westfall, 143). Newton "arrived at the inverse square relation by substituting Kepler's Third Law into Huygens's recently published formula for centrifugal force" (Westfall, 402). Hooke and Sir Christopher Wren claimed to have done the same thing at about the same time.

Newton's love of alchemy and magic surfaces as the basis of his outlook, including in his supposed scientific writings. In his "Opticks," he asks, "Have not the small particles of bodies certain powers, virtues, or forces, by which they act at a distance.... How those attractions may be performed, I do not here consider. What I call attraction may be performed by Impulse, or some other means unknown to me." This is Newton's notion of gravity as action at a distance, which Leibniz rightly mocked as black magic. Newton's system was unable to describe anything beyond the interaction of two bodies, and supposed an entropic universe that would have wound down like clockwork if not periodically re-wound. Newton also wrote of an electric spirit, and of a mysterious medium he called the ether. What the basis of these is in alchemy is not clear.

Then there is the story of Newton's invention of the calculus. In reality, Newton never in his entire life described a calculus. He never had one. What he cooked up was a theory of so-called fluxions and infinite series. This was not a calculus and quickly sank into oblivion when it was published nine years after Newton's death. By 1710, European scientists had been working with Leibniz's calculus for several decades. It was about that time that Newton and the British Royal Society launched their campaign to claim that Newton had actually invented the calculus in 1671, although for some strange reason he had never said anything about it in public print during a period of 30 years. This was supplemented by a second allegation, that Leibniz was a plagiarist who had copied his calculus from Newton after some conversations and letters exchanged between the two during the 1670s. These slanders against Leibniz were written up by Newton and put forward in 1715 as the official verdict of the British Royal Society. The same line was churned out by scurrilous hack writers directed by Newton. But scientists in continental Europe, and especially the decisive French Academy of Sciences, were not at all convinced by Newton's case. Newton's reputation on the continent was at best modest, and certainly not exalted. There was resistance against Newton in England, with a hard core of 20-25% of anti-Newton feeling within the Royal Society itself. How then did the current myth of Newton the scientist originate?

**NEWTON: THE APOTHEOSIS OF A CHARLATAN**

The apotheosis of Newton was arranged by Antonio Conti of Venice, the center of our third grouping of the dead souls faction. In order to create the myth of Newton as the great modern scientist, Conti was obliged to do what might well have been considered impossible at the time: to create a pro-British party in France. Conti succeeded, and stands as the founder of the Enlightenment, otherwise understood as the network of French Anglophiles. Those Frenchmen who were degraded enough to become Anglophiles would also be degraded enough to become Newtonians, and vice versa. The British had no network in Paris that could make this happen, but the Venetians did, thanks most recently to the work of such figures as Montaigne and Pierre Bayle. What the British could never have done, the Venetians accomplished for the greater glory of the Anglo- Venetian Party.

Born in Padua in 1677, Conti was a patrician, a member of the Venetian nobility. He was a defrocked priest who had joined the Oratorian order, but then left it to pursue literary and scientific interests, including Galileo and Descartes. Conti was still an abbot. In 1713, Conti arrived in Paris. This was at the time of the Peace of Utrecht, the end of the long and very bitter War of the Spanish Succession, in which the British, the Dutch, and their allies had invaded, defeated, and weakened the France of Jean-Baptiste Colbert. Louis XIV had only two more years to live, after which the throne would go to a regent of the House of Orleans.

In Paris, Conti built up a network centering on the philosopher Nicholas de Malebranche. He also worked closely with Bernard Le Bovier de Fontenelle, the permanent secretary of the French Academy of Sciences, still the premier research center in Europe. Conti saw immediately that Fontenelle was a follower of Giordano Bruno of the Ridotto Morosini. Conti become a celebrity in Paris, but he soon announced that he was growing tired to Descartes, the dominant figure on the French intellectual scene. Conti began telling the Paris salons that he was turning more and more to Newton and Leibniz. He began to call attention to the polemic between Newton and Leibniz. What a shame that these two eminent scientists were fighting each other! Perhaps these two outlooks could be reconciled. That would take a tactful mediator, an experienced man of the world. Since the English and the German scientists were at war, who better than an Italian, a Venetian, to come forward as mediator? Perhaps such a subtle Venetian could find a way to settle this nasty dispute about the calculus and propose a compromise platform for physics.

A solar eclipse was in the offing, and Conti organized a group of French astronomers to go to London and observe it - probably the London fog would be helpful. With Conti's help these Frenchmen would be turned, made members of the Royal Society, and when they got back to France, they would become the first French Anglophiles of the eighteenth century French Enlightenment. Before leaving Paris, Conti, with classical Venetian duplicity, wrote a very friendly letter to Leibniz, introducing himself as a supporter of Leibniz's philosophy. Conti claimed that he was going to London as a supporter of Leibniz, who would defend his cause in London just as he had done in Paris. By 1715, Leibniz's political perspectives were very grim, since his patroness, Sophie of Hanover, had died in May 1714. Leibniz was not going to become prime minister of England, because the new British king was Georg Ludwig of Hanover, King George I.

When Conti got to London, he began to act as a diabolical agent provocateur. Turning on his magnetism, he charmed Newton. Newton was impressed by his guest and began to let his hair down. Conti told Newton that he had been trained as a Cartesian. "I was myself, when young, a Cartesian," said the sage wistfully, and then added that Cartesian philosophy was nothing but a "tissue of hypotheses," and of course Newton would never tolerate hypotheses. Newton confessed that he had understood nothing of his first astronomy book, after which he tried a trigonometry book with equal failure. But he could understand Descartes very well. With the ground thus prepared, Conti was soon a regular dinner guest at Newton's house. He seems to have dined with Newton on the average three evenings per week. Conti also had extensive contacts with Edmond Halley, with Newton's anti-Trinitarian parish priest Samuel Clarke, and other self-styled scientists. Conti also became friendly with Princess Caroline, the Princess of Wales, who had been an ally of Leibniz. Conti became very popular at the British court, and by November 1715 he was inducted by Newton as a member of the Royal Society.

Conti understood that Newton, kook that he was, represented the ideal cult figure for a new obscurantist concoction of deductive- inductive pseudo mathematical formalism masquerading as science. Thanks to the Venetians, Italy had Galileo, and France had Descartes. Conti might have considered concocting a pseudo scientific ideology for the English based on Descartes, but that clearly would not do, since Venice desired to use England above all as a tool to tear down France with endless wars. Venice needed an English Galileo, and Conti provided the intrigue and the public relations needed to produce one, in a way not so different from Paolo Sarpi a century before.

**THE LEIBNIZ-NEWTON CONTEST**

Conti received a letter from Leibniz repeating that Newton had never mastered the calculus, and attacking Newton for his occult notion of gravitation, his insistence on the existence of atoms and the void, his inductive method. Whenever Conti got a letter from Leibniz, he would show it to Newton, to stoke the fires of Newton's obsessive rage to destroy Leibniz. During this time, Newton's friend Samuel Clarke began an exchange of letters with Leibniz about these and related issues. (Voltaire later remarked of Clarke that he would have made an ideal Archbishop of Canterbury if only he had been a Christian.) Leibniz wrote that natural religion itself was decaying in England, where many believe human souls to be material, and others view God as a corporeal being. Newton said that space is an organ, which God uses to perceive things. Newton and his followers also had a very odd opinion concerning the work of God. According to their doctrine, "God Almighty wants to wind up his watch from time to time; otherwise, it would cease to move. He had not, it seems, sufficient foresight to make it a perpetual motion." This gave rise to the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence, in which we can also see the hand of Conti. By now, the chameleon Conti was a total partisan of Newton's line of atoms and the void, the axioms of Newtonian absolute space. "If there were no void," wrote Conti, "all bodies would be equally heavy and the comets could not pass through heavenly spaces.... M. Leibniz has written his speech to Princess [Caroline], and he presents the world not as it is, but as it could be." (Badaloni, Antonio Conti, 63).

Newton tried to get the ambassadors of the London diplomatic corps to review his old manuscripts and letters, hoping they would endorse the finding of the Royal Society that Leibniz had plagiarized his calculus. Leibniz had pointed out that the Royal Society had stacked the evidence. Conti used this matter to turn George I more and more against Leibniz. Conti organized the Baron von Kilmansegge, the Hanoverian minister and husband of George I's mistress, to take the position that the review of documents would not be enough; the only way to decide the Leibniz-Newton controversy was through a direct exchange of letters between the two. King George agreed with this. Conti encouraged Newton to make a full reply to Leibniz, so that both letters could be shown to the king. When he heard Newton's version, the king indicated that Newton's facts would be hard for Leibniz to answer.

Conti tried to convince Leibniz to accept the 1715 verdict of the Royal Society which had given credit for the calculus to Newton. In return, to sweeten this galling proposal, Conti generously conceded that Leibniz's calculus was easier to use and more widely accepted. By now Leibniz was well aware that he was dealing with an enemy operative, but Leibniz died on Nov. 4, 1716, a few days before Conti arrived in Hanover to meet him. Newton received word of the death of his great antagonist through a letter from Conti.

**CONTI'S DEPLOYMENT TO FRANCE**

Thanks to Conti's intervention as agent provocateur, Newton had received immense publicity and had become a kind of succes de scandale. The direct exchange mandated by George I suggested to some an equivalence of Leibniz and Newton. But now Conti's most important work was just beginning. Leibniz was still held in high regard in all of continental Europe, and the power of France was still immense. Conti and the Venetians wished to destroy both. In the Leibniz-Newton contest, Conti had observed that while the English sided with Newton and the Germans with Leibniz, the French, Italians, Dutch, and other continentals wavered, but still had great sympathy for Leibniz. These powers would be the decisive swing factors in the epistemological war. In particular, the attitude which prevailed in France, the greatest European power, would be decisive. Conti now sought to deliver above all France, plus Italy, into the Newtonian camp.

Conti was in London between 1715 and 1718. His mission to France lasted from 1718 through 1726. Its result will be called the French Enlightenment, L'Age des Lumieres. The first components activated by Conti for the new Newtonian party in France were the school and followers of Malebranche, who died in 1715. The Malebranchistes first accepted Newton's Opticks, and claimed to have duplicated Newton's experiments, something no Frenchman had done until this time. Here Conti was mobilizing the Malebranche network he had assembled before going to London. Conti used his friendship with Fontenelle, the secretary of the French Academy of Sciences, to secure his benevolent neutrality regarding Newton. Conti's other friends included Mairan, Reaumur, Freret, and Desmolets.

During the late teens and '20s in Paris, an important salon met at the Hotel de Rohan, the residence of one of the greatest families of the French nobility. This family was aligned with Venice; later, we will find the Cardinal-Prince de Rohan as the sponsor of the Venetian agent Count Cagliostro. The librarian at the Hotel de Rohan was a certain Abbe Oliva. Oliva presided over a Venetian-style conversazione attended by Conti, his Parisian friends, and numerous Italians. This was already a circle of freethinkers and libertines.

In retrospect, the best known of the participants was Charles-Louis de Secondat, Baron de la Brede et de Montesquieu. Montesquieu, before Voltaire, Rousseau, and the Encyclopedia, was the first important figure of the French Enlightenment - more respectable than Voltaire and Rousseau - and the leading theoretician of political institutions. Conti met Montesquieu at the Hotel de Rohan, and at another salon, the Club de l'Entresol. Later, when Conti had returned to Venice, Montesquieu came to visit him there, staying a month. Montesquieu was an agent for Conti.

Montesquieu's major work is The Spirit of the Laws, published in 1748. This is a work of decidedly Venetian flavor, with republic, monarchy, and despotism as the three forms of government, and a separation of powers doctrine. Montesquieu appears to have taken many of his ideas from Conti, who wrote a profile of France called "Historical and Political Discourse on the State of France between 1700 and 1730." In his treatise, Montesquieu points out that France has an independent judiciary, the parlements, which became a main focus for Anglo-Venetian destabilization efforts going toward the French Revolution.

Montesquieu raises the theme of Anglophilia, praising Britain's allegedly constitutional monarchy as the ideal form. With this, the pro-British bent of Conti's Enlightenment philosophes is established. The ground is being prepared for Newton.

**ANOTHER CONTI AGENT: VOLTAIRE**

One of Conti's other friends from the Hotel de Rohan was a Jesuit called Tournemine, who was also a high school teacher. One of his most incorrigible pupils had been a libertine jailbird named Francois-Marie Arouet, who was so stubborn and headstrong that his parents had always called him "le volontaire," meaning self-willed. Gradually this was shortened to Voltaire.

French literary historians are instinctively not friendly to the idea that the most famous Frenchman was a Venetian agent working for Conti, but the proof is convincing. Voltaire knew both Conti personally and Conti's works. Conti is referred to a number of times in Voltaire's letters. In one letter, Voltaire admiringly shares an anecdote about Conti and Newton. Voltaire asks, should we try to find the proof of the existence of God in an algebraic formula on one of the most obscure points in dynamics? He cites Conti in a similar situation with Newton: "You're about to get angry with me," says Conti to Newton, "but I don't care." I agree with Conti, says Voltaire, that all geometry can give us are about forty useful theorems. Beyond that, it's nothing more than a fascinating subject, provided you don't let metaphysics creep in.

Voltaire also relates Conti's version of the alleged Spanish conspiracy against Venice in 1618, which was supposedly masterminded by the Spanish ambassador to Venice, Count Bedmar. Conti's collected works and one of his tragedies are in Voltaire's library, preserved at the Hermitage in St. Petersburg.

The book which made Voltaire famous was his Philosophical Letters, sometimes called the English letters, because they are devoted to the exaltation of all things British, which Voltaire had observed during his three years in London. In the essay on Shakespeare, Voltaire writes that Shakespeare is considered the Corneille of England. This is a quote from Conti, taken from the head note to Conti's tragedy Giulio Cesare, which had been published in Paris in 1726. Voltaire's view of Shakespeare as sometimes inspired, but barbarous and "crazy" for not respecting French theatrical conventions, is close to Conti's own practice. We can thus associate Conti with Voltaire's first important breakthrough, and the point where Anglophilia becomes Anglomania in France.

But most important, Voltaire's Philosophical Letters center on the praise of Newton. After chapters on Francis Bacon and John Locke, there are four chapters on Newton, the guts of the work. For Voltaire, Newton was the first discoverer of the calculus, the dismantler of the entire Cartesian system. His "sublime ideas" and discoveries have given him "the most universal reputation." Voltaire also translated Newton directly, and published Elements of Newtonian Philosophy.

The Philosophical Letters were condemned and Voltaire had to hide in the libertine underground for a time. He began to work on another book, The Century of Louis XIV. The idea here was simple: to exalt Louis XIV as a means of attacking the current king, Louis XV, by comparison. This was an idea that we can also find in Conti's manuscripts. Louis XV was, of course, a main target of the Anglo-Venetians.

In 1759, Voltaire published his short novel Candide, a distillation of Venetian cultural pessimism expressed as a raving attack on Leibniz, through the vicious caricature Dr. Pangloss. Toward the end of the story, Candide asks Pangloss: "Tell me, my dear Pangloss, when you were hanged, dissected, cruelly beaten, and forced to row in a galley, did you still think that everything was for the best in this world?" "I still hold my original opinions, replied Pangloss, because after all, I'm a philosopher, and it wouldn't be proper for me to recant, since Leibniz cannot be wrong, and since pre-established harmony is the most beautiful thing in the world, along with the plenum and subtle matter." When Candide visits Venice, he meets Senator Pococurante, whom he considers a great genius because everything bores him and nothing pleases him. Senator Pococurante is clearly a figure of Abbot Antonio Conti. Conti was, we must remember, the man whom Voltaire quoted admiringly in his letter cited above telling Newton that he didn't care - non me ne curo, perhaps, in Italian. Among Conti's masks was certainly that of worldly boredom.

Conti later translated one of Voltaire's plays, Merope, into Italian.

**CONTI AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION**

Conti's discussion of the supremacy of the sense of touch when it comes to sense certainty is echoed in the writing of the philosopher Condillac. Echoes of Conti have been found by some in Diderot's Jacques the Fatalist. And then there is Buffon, who published Newton's book on fluxions in French. More research is likely to demonstrate that most of the ideas of the French Enlightenment come from the Venetian Conti. The creation of a pro- Newton, anti-Leibniz party of French Anglomaniacs was a decisive contribution to the defeat of France in the mid-century world war we call the War of the Austrian Succession and the Seven Years' War, which gave Britain world naval supremacy, and world domination. Conti's work was also the basis for the later unleashing of the French Revolution. In the epistemological war, the French Newtonians were indispensable for the worldwide consolidation of the Newton myth. In Italy, there were Venetian writers like Voltaire's friend Algarotti, the author of a book of Newtonian Philosophy for Ladies. Newton's ideas were also spread by Abbot Guido Grandi, who labored to rehabilitate Galileo inside the Catholic Church. Another Italian intellectual in Conti's orbit was Gimbattista Vico, later popularized by Benedetto Croce. The main point is that only with the help of Venice could the senile cultist kook Newton attain worldwide respect.

Conti was active until mid-century; he died in 1749. In Venice he became the central figure of a salon that was the worthy heir of Ridotto Morosini. This was the sinister coven that called itself the philosophical happy conversazione ("la conversazione filosofica e felice") that gathered patrician families like the Emo, the Nani, the Querini, the Memmo, and the Giustinian. These were libertines, freethinkers, Satanists. We are moving toward the world portrayed in Schiller's Geisterseher. After Conti's death, the dominant figure was Andrea Memmo, one of the leaders of European Freemasonry.

An agent shared by Memmo with the Morosini family was one Giacomo Casanova, a homosexual who was backed up by a network of lesbians. Venetian oligarchs turned to homosexuality because of their obsession with keeping the family fortune intact by guaranteeing that there would only be one heir to inherit it; by this time more than two- thirds of male nobles, and an even higher percentage of female nobles, never married. Here we have the roots of Henry Kissinger's modern Homintern. Casanova's main task was to target the French King Louis XV through his sexual appetites. There is good reason to believe that Louis XV's foreign minister De Bernis, who carried out the diplomatic revolution of 1756, was an agent of Casanova. One may speculate that Casanova's networks had something to do with the approximately 25 assassination plots against Louis XV. Finally, Louis XV banned Casanova from France with a lettre de cachet.

Another agent of this group was Count Cagliostro, a charlatan and mountebank whose targets were Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, whom he destabilized through their own folly in the celebrated Queen's Necklace Affair of 1785. Cagliostro was able to make Louis and especially Marie Antoinette personally hated, a necessary precondition for mass insurrection against them. Emperor Napoleon later said that this operation by Cagliostro had marked the opening phase of the French Revolution of 1789.

**CONTI'S LEGACY OF EVIL**

Another member of the Conti-Memmo conversazione was Giammaria Ortes, who had been taught Newton by Conti personally, as well as by Grandi. Ortes was another defrocked cleric operating as an abbot. Ortes is the author of a manual of Newtonian physics for young aristocrats, including a chapter on electricity which manages to avoid Benjamin Franklin, in the same way that Galileo avoided Kepler. Ortes carried out Conti's program of applying Newtonian methods to the social sciences. This meant that everything had to be expressed in numbers. Ortes was like the constipated mathematician who worked his problem out with a pencil. He produced a calculus on the value of opinions, a calculus of the pleasures and pains of human life, a calculus of the truth of history. This is the model for Jeremy Bentham's felicific or hedonistic calculus and other writings. Using these methods, Ortes posited an absolute upper limit for the human population of the Earth, which he set at 3 billion. This is the first appearance of carrying capacity. Ortes was adamant that there had never been and could never be an improvement in the living standard of the Earth's human population. He argued that government intervention, as supported by the Cammeralist school of Colbert, Franklin, and others, could never do any good. Ortes provided all of the idea-content that is found in Thomas Malthus, Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, the two Mills, and the rest of Lord Shelburne's school of British philosophical radicalism in the time after 1775.

Conti has left a commentary on Plato's Parmenides, which he interprets as Plato's self- criticism for the mistake of having made ideas themselves the object of philosophical attention. In his Treatise on Ideas, Conti writes that the fundamental error of Plato is to attribute real existence to human ideas. All our ideas come from sense perceptions, says Conti.

In 1735 Conti was denounced to the Venetian Inquisition because of his reported religious ideas. Conti was accused of denying the existence of God. True to his factional pedigree, Conti also denied the immortality of the human soul. Conti reportedly said of the soul: "Since it is united with a material body and mixed up with matter, the soul perished with the body itself." Conti got off with the help of his patrician aristocrat friends. He commented that God is something that we cannot know about, and jokingly confessed his ignorance. He even compared himself to Cardinal Nicolaus of Cusa. Conti described his own atheism as merely a version of the docta ignorantia [referring to Cusa's book by the same name, On Learned Ignorance]. But this Senatore Pococurante still lives in every classroom where Newton is taught.

Surely it is time for an epistemological revolution to roll back the Venetian frauds of Galileo, Newton, and Bertrand Russell.

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**END**

**VENICE'S WAR AGAINST WESTERN CIVILIZATION**

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The British royal family of today typifies the Venetian Party, and continues the outlook and methods of an oligarchical faction which can be traced far back into the ancient world. Oligarchism is a principle of irrational domination associated with hereditary oligarchy/ *nobility* and with certain aristocratic priesthoods. At the center of oligarchy is the idea that certain families are born to rule as an arbitrary elite, while the vast majority of any given population is condemned to oppression, serfdom, or slavery. During most of the past 2,500 years, oligarchs have been identified by their support for the philosophical writings of Aristotle and their rejection of the epistemology of Plato. Aristotle asserted that slavery is a necessary institution, because some are born to rule and others to be ruled. He also reduced the question of human knowledge to the crudest sense certainty and perception of "facts." Aristotle's formalism is a means of killing human creativity, and therefore represents absolute evil. This evil is expressed by the bestialist view *of the oligarchs* that human beings are the same as animals.

Oligarchs identify wealth purely in money, and practice usury, monetarism, and looting at the expense of technological advancement and physical production. Oligarchs have always been associated with the arbitrary rejection of true scientific discovery and scientific method in favor of open anti-science or more subtle obscurantist pseudo-science. The oligarchy has believed for millennia that the earth is overpopulated; the oligarchical commentary on the Trojan War was that this conflict was necessary in order to prevent greater numbers of mankind from oppressing "Mother Earth." The oligarchy has constantly stressed race and racial characteristics, often as a means for justifying slavery. In international affairs, oligarchs recommend such methods as geopolitics, understood as the method of divide and conquer which lets one power prevail by playing its adversaries one against the other. Oligarchical policy strives to maintain a balance of power among such adversaries for its own benefit, but this attempt always fails in the long run and leads to new wars.

The essence of oligarchism is summed up in the idea of the empire, in which an elite identifying itself as a master race rules over a degraded mass of slaves or other oppressed victims. If oligarchical methods are allowed to dominate human affairs, they always create a breakdown crisis of civilization, with economic depression, war, famine, plague, and pestilence. Examples of this are the fourteenth century Black Plague crisis and the Thirty Years War (1618-48), both of which were created by Venetian intelligence. The post- industrial society and the derivatives crisis have brought about the potential for a new collapse of civilization in our own time. This crisis can only be reversed by repudiating in practice the axioms of the oligarchical mentality.

A pillar of the oligarchical system is the family fortune, or *fondo* as it is called in Italian. The continuity of the family fortune which earns money through usury and looting is often more important than the biological continuity across generations of the family that owns the fortune. In Venice, the largest fondo was the endowment of the Basilica of St. Mark, which was closely associated with the Venetian state treasury, and which absorbed the family fortunes of nobles who died without heirs. This fondo was administered by the procurers of St. Mark, whose position was one of the most powerful under the Venetian system. Around this central fondo were grouped the individual family fortunes of the great oligarchical families, such as the Mocenigo, the Cornaro, the Dandolo, the Contarini, the Morosini, the Zorzi, and the Tron. Until the end of the eighteenth century, the dozen or so wealthiest Venetian families had holdings comparable or superior to the very wealthiest families anywhere in Europe. When the Venetian oligarchy transferred many of its families and assets to northern Europe, the Venetian fondi provided the nucleus of the great Bank of Amsterdam, which dominated Europe during the seventeenth century, and of the Bank of England, which became the leading bank of the eighteenth century.

**ORIGINS OF THE VENETIAN PARTY IN THE ANCIENT WORLD**

In the pre-Christian world around the Mediterranean, oligarchical political forces included Babylon in Mesopotamia. The "whore of Babylon" condemned in the Apocalypse of St. John the Divine is not a mystical construct, but a very specific power cartel of evil oligarchical families. Other oligarchical centers included Hiram of Tyre and the Phoenicians. The Persian Empire was an oligarchy. In the Greek world, the center of oligarchical banking and intelligence was the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, whose agents included Lycurgus of Sparta and later Aristotle. The Delphic Apollo tried and failed to secure the conquest of Greece by the Persian Empire. Then the Delphic Apollo developed the Isocrates plan, which called for King Philip of Macedonia to conquer Athens and the other great city-states so as to set up an oligarchical empire that would operate as a western version of the Persian Empire. This plan failed when Philip died, and the Platonic Academy of Athens decisively influenced Alexander the Great, who finally destroyed the Persian Empire before being assassinated by Aristotle. Later, the Delphic Apollo intervened into the wars between Rome and the Etruscan cities to make Rome the key power of Italy and then of the entire Mediterranean.

Rome dominated the Mediterranean by about 200 BC. There followed a series of civil wars that aimed at deciding where the capital of the new empire would be and who would be the ruling family. These are associated with the Social War, the conflict between Marius and Sulla, the first Triumvirate (Julius Caesar, Pompey the Great, and L. Crassus), and the second Triumvirate (Octavian, Marc Antony, and Lepidus). Marc Antony and Cleopatra wanted the capital of the new empire to be at Alexandria in Egypt. Octavian (Augustus) secured an alliance with the cult of Sol Invictus Mithra and became emperor, defeating the other contenders. After the series of monsters called the Julian-Claudian emperors (Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, etc.) the empire stagnated between 80 and 180 AD under such figures as Hadrian and Trajan. Then, between 180 and 280 AD, the empire collapsed. It was reorganized by Aurelian, Diocletian, and Constantine with a series of measures that centered on banning any change in the technology of the means of production, and very heavy taxation. The Diocletian program led to the depopulation of the cities, serfdom for farmers, and the collapse of civilization into a prolonged Dark Age.

The Roman Empire in the West finally collapsed in 476 AD. But the Roman Empire in the East, sometimes called the Byzantine Empire, continued for almost a thousand years, until 1453. And if the Ottoman Empire is considered as the Ottoman dynasty of an ongoing Byzantine Empire, then the Byzantine Empire kept going until shortly after World War I. With certain exceptions, the ruling dynasties of Byzantium continued the oligarchical policy of Diocletian and Constantine.

Venice, the city built on islands in the lagoons and marshes of the northern Adriatic Sea, is supposed to have been founded by refugees from the Italian mainland who were fleeing from Attila the Hun in 452 AD. Early on, Venice became the location of a Benedictine monastery on the island of St. George Major. St. George is not a Christian saint, but rather a disguise for Apollo, Perseus, and Marduk, idols of the oligarchy. Around 700 AD, the Venetians claim to have elected their first doge, or duke. This post was not hereditary, but was controlled by an election in which only the nobility could take part. For this reason, Venice erroneously called itself a republic.

In the years around 800 AD, Charlemagne, King of the Franks, using the ideas of St. Augustine, attempted to revive civilization from the Dark Ages. Venice was the enemy of Charlemagne. Charlemagne's son, King Pepin of Italy, tried unsuccessfully to conquer the Venetian lagoon. Charlemagne was forced to recognize Venice as a part of the eastern or Byzantine Empire, under the protection of the Emperor Nicephorus. Venice was never a part of western civilization.

Over the next four centuries, Venice developed as a second capital of the Byzantine Empire through marriage alliances with certain Byzantine dynasties and conflicts with the Holy Roman Empire based in Germany. The Venetian economy grew through usury and slavery. By 1082, the Venetians had tax-free trading rights in the entire Byzantine Empire. The Venetians were one of the main factors behind the Crusades against the Muslim power in the eastern Mediterranean. In the Fourth Crusade of 1202 AD, the Venetians used an army of French feudal knights to capture and loot Constantinople, the Orthodox Christian city which was the capital of the Byzantine Empire. The Venetian doge Enrico Dandolo was declared the lord of one-quarter and one-half of one-quarter of the Byzantine Empire, and the Venetians imposed a short-lived puppet state called the Latin Empire. By this point, Venice had replaced Byzantium as the bearer of the oligarchical heritage of the Roman Empire.

During the 1200's, the Venetians, now at the apex of their military and naval power, set out to create a new Roman Empire with its center at Venice. They expanded into the Greek islands, the Black Sea, and the Italian mainland. They helped to defeat the Hohenstaufen rulers of Germany and Italy. Venetian intelligence assisted Genghis Khan as he attacked and wiped out powers that had resisted Venice. The Venetians caused the death of the poet and political figure Dante Alighieri, who developed the concept of the modern sovereign nation-state in opposition to the Venetian plans for empire. A series of wars with Genoa led later to the de facto merger of Venice and Genoa. The Venetian bankers, often called Lombards, began to loot many parts of Europe with usurious loans. Henry III of England in the years after 1255 became insolvent after taking huge Lombard loans to finance foreign wars at 120-180 percent interest. These transactions created the basis for the Venetian Party in England. When the Lombard bankers went bankrupt because the English failed to pay, a breakdown crisis of the European economy ensued. This led to a new collapse of European civilization, including the onset of the Black Plague, which depopulated the continent. In the midst of the chaos, the Venetians encouraged their ally Edward III of England to wage war against France in the conflict that became the Hundred Years War (1339-1453), which hurled France into chaos before St. Joan of Arc defeated the English. This was then followed by the Wars of the Roses in England. As a result of Venetian domination, the fourteenth century had become a catastrophe for civilization.

In the midst of the crisis of the 1300's, the friends of Dante and Petrarch laid the basis for the Italian Golden Renaissance, which reached its culmination with Nicolaus of Cusanus, Pope Pius II, and the Medici- sponsored Council of Florence of 1439. The Venetians fought the Renaissance with a policy of expansion on the Italian mainland, or terra firma, which brought them to the outskirts of Milan. More fundamentally, the Venetians promoted the pagan philosophy of Aristotle against the Christian Platonism of the Florentines. The school of the Rialto was an Aristotelian academy where Venetian patricians lectured and studied their favorite philosopher. Authors like Barbaro and Bembo popularized an Aristotelian "humanism." The University of Padua became the great European center for Aristotelian studies.

Venice also encouraged the Ottoman Turks to advance against Constantinople, which was now controlled by the Paleologue dynasty of emperors. When Cusanus and his friends succeeded in reuniting the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox and other eastern churches at the Council of Florence, the Venetians tried to sabotage this result. The ultimate sabotage was the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, which was assisted by Venetian agents and provocateurs. Venice refused to respond to Pope Pius II (Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini) when he called for the recovery of Constantinople.

The program of Cusanus, Pius II, Machiavelli, Leonardo da Vinci, and other Italian Renaissance leaders for the creation of powerful national states proved impossible to carry out in Italy. The first nation-state was created in France by King Louis XI during the 1460's and 1470's. The successful nation-building methods of Louis XI compelled attention and imitation in England and Spain. Despite their incessant intrigues, the Venetians were now confronted with large national states whose military power greatly exceeded anything that Venice could mobilize.

**THE CRISIS OF THE WAR OF THE LEAGUE OF CAMBRAI, 1508-1529**

The Venetians tried to use the power of the new nation-states, especially France, to crush Milan and allow further Venetian expansion. But ambassadors for the king of France and the Austrian emperor met at Cambrai in December 1508 and agreed to create a European league for the dismemberment of Venice. The League of Cambrai soon included France, Spain, Germany, the Papacy, Milan, Florence, Savoy, Mantua, Ferrara, and others. At the battle of Agnadello in April 1509, the Venetian mercenaries were defeated by the French, and Venice temporarily lost eight hundred years of land conquests.

Venetian diplomacy played on the greed of the Genoese Pope Julius II Della Rovere, who was bribed to break up the League of Cambrai. By rapid diplomatic maneuvers, Venice managed to survive, although foreign armies threatened to overrun the lagoons on several occasions, and the city was nearly bankrupt. Venice's long-term outlook was very grim, especially because the Portuguese had opened a route to Asia around the Cape of Good Hope. The Venetians considered building a Suez canal, but decided against it.

**REFORMATION AND COUNTER-REFORMATION**

One result of the Cambrai crisis was the decision of Venetian intelligence to create the Protestant Reformation. The goal was to divide Europe for one to two centuries in religious wars that would prevent any combination like the League of Cambrai from ever again being assembled against Venice. The leading figure of the Protestant Reformation, the first Protestant in modern Europe, was Venice's Cardinal Gasparo Contarini. Contarini was a pupil of the Padua Aristotelian Pietro Pomponazzi, who denied the immortality of the human soul. Contarini pioneered the Protestant doctrine of salvation by faith alone, with no regard for good works of charity. Contarini organized a group of Italian Protestants called *gli spirituali*, including oligarchs like Vittoria Colonna and Giulia Gonzaga. Contarini's networks encouraged and protected Martin Luther and later John Calvin of Geneva. Contarini sent his neighbor and relative Francesco Zorzi to England to support King Henry VIII's plan to divorce Catherine of Aragon. Zorzi acted as Henry's sex counselor. As a result, Henry created the Anglican Church on a Venetian- Byzantine model, and opened a phase of hostility to Spain. Henceforth, the Venetians would use England for attacks on Spain and France. Zorzi created a Rosicrucian- Freemasonic party at the English court that later produced writers like Edmund Spenser and Sir Philip Sydney.

Contarini was also the leader of the Catholic Counter- Reformation. He sponsored St. Ignatius of Loyola and secured papal approval for the creation of the Society of Jesus as an official order of the Church. Contarini also began the process of organizing the Council of Trent with a letter on church reform that praised Aristotle while condemning Erasmus, the leading Platonist of the day. The Venetians dominated the college of cardinals and created the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, which banned works by Dante and Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (Pope Pius II).

As the Counter- Reformation advanced, the Contarini networks split into two wings. One was the pro-Protestant *spirituali*, who later evolved into the party of the Venetian oligarchy called the *giovani*, and who serviced growing networks in France, Holland, England, and Scotland. On the other wing were the *zelanti*, oriented toward repression and the Inquisition, and typified by Pope Paul IV Caraffa. The zelanti evolved into the oligarchical party called the *vecchi*, who serviced Venetian networks in the Vatican and the Catholic Hapsburg dominions. The apparent conflict of the two groups was orchestrated to serve Venetian projects.

During the decades after 1570, the salon of the Ridotto Morosini family was the focus of heirs of the pro-Protestant wing of the Contarini spirituali networks. These were the giovani, whose networks were strongest in the Atlantic powers of France, England, Holland, and Scotland. The central figure here was the Servite monk Paolo Sarpi, assisted by his deputy, Fulgenzio Micanzio. Sarpi was the main Venetian propagandist in the struggle against the papacy during the time of the papal interdict against Venice in 1606. Sarpi and Micanzio were in close touch with the Stuart court in London, and especially with Sir Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes, who got their ideas from Sarpi's *Pensieri* (Thoughts) and *Arte di Ben Pensare* (Art of Thinking Well). Sarpi's agents in Prague, Heidelberg, and Vienna deliberately organized the Thirty Years War, which killed half the population of Germany and one-third of the population of Europe.

Sarpi also marks a turning point in the methods used by Venetian intelligence to combat science. Under Zorzi and Contarini, the Venetians had been openly hostile to Cusanus and other leading scientists. Sarpi realized that the Venetians must now present themselves as the great champions of science, but on the basis of Aristotelian formalism and sense certainty. By seizing control of the scientific community from the inside, the Venetians could corrupt scientific method and strangle the process of discovery. Sarpi sponsored and directed the career of Galileo Galilei, whom the Venetians used for an empiricist counterattack against the Platonic method of Johannes Kepler.

**GROWTH OF THE VENETIAN PARTY**

During the 1600's, the Venetian fondi were transferred north, often to the Bank of Amsterdam, and later to the newly founded Bank of England. During the reign of "Bloody Mary," the Stuart period, the civil war in England, the dictatorship of Cromwell, the Stuart Restoration, and the 1688 installation of William of Orange as King of England by the pro-Venetian English oligarchy, the Venetian Party of England grew in power.

During the first half of the 1700's, the most important activities of Venetian intelligence were directed by a salon called the *conversazione filosofica e felice*, which centered around the figure of Antonio Schinella Conti. Conti was a Venetian nobleman, originally a follower of Descartes, who lived for a time in Paris, where he was close to Malebranche. Conti went to London where he became a friend of Sir Isaac Newton. Conti directed the operations that made Newton an international celebrity, including especially the creation of a pro-Newton party of French Anglophiles and Anglomaniacs who came to be known as the French Enlightenment. Conti's agents in this effort included Montesquieu and Voltaire. Conti was also active in intrigues against the German philosopher, scientist, and economist Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, whom Conti portrayed as a plagiarist of Newton. Conti also influenced Georg Ludwig of Hanover, later King George I of England, against Leibniz.

The Conti conversazione was also sponsored by the Emo and Memmo oligarchical families. Participants included Giammaria Ortes, the Venetian economist who asserted that the carrying capacity of the planet Earth could never exceed three billion persons. Ortes was a student of the pro-Galileo activist Guido Grandi of Pisa. Ortes applied Newton's method to the so-called social sciences. Ortes denied the possibility of progress or higher standards of living, supported free trade, opposed dirigist economics, and polemicized against the ideas of the American Revolution. The ideas of Conti, Ortes, and their network were brought into Great Britain under the supervision of William Petty, the Earl of Shelburne, who was the de facto Doge of the British oligarchy around the time of the American Revolution. The Shelburne stable of writers, including Adam Smith, Jeremy Bentham, Thomas Malthus, James Mill, John Stuart Mill, Charles Darwin, and other exponents of British philosophical radicalism, all take their main ideas from Conti and especially Ortes.

Francesco Algarotti, author of a treatise on "Newtonian Science for Ladies," was another Venetian in the orbit of the Conti conversazione. Algarotti was close to Voltaire, and along with the French scientist Pierre Louis de Maupertuis he helped form the homosexual harem around British ally Frederick the Great of Prussia. Frederick the Great was Britain's principal continental ally during the Seven Years War against France, when British victories in India and Canada made them the supreme naval power of the world. The homosexual Frederick made Algarotti his court chamberlain at his palace of Sans Souci. Maupertuis had become famous when he went to Lapland to measure a degree of the local meridian, and came back claiming that he had confirmed one of Newton's postulates. Frederick made him the president of the Berlin Academy of Sciences. Frederick corresponded with Voltaire all his life; Voltaire lived at Sans Souci and Berlin between 1750 and 1753. Voltaire quarreled with Maupertuis and attacked him in his "Diatribe of Doctor Akakia." The mathematicians Leonhard Euler of Switzerland and Joseph Louis Lagrange of Turin were also associated with Frederick's cabal.

The Conti salon directed the activities of Venetian intelligence agent Giacomo Casanova, a protégé of the homosexual Senator Bragadin. Casanova was employed primarily in operations against King Louis XV of France. During the War of the Spanish Succession, the Venetians helped the British to emerge as a great power at the expense of Holland and Spain. In the War of the Austrian Succession and the Seven Years' War, the Venetians helped the British to defeat the French as a world-wide naval power, ousting them from India and Canada. Later the Venetian agent Alessandro Cagliostro would destabilize Louis XVI with the Queen's necklace affair of 1785, which according to Napoleon Bonaparte represented the opening of the French Revolution.

Venice ceased to exist as an independent state after its conquest by Napoleon in 1797 and the Austrian takeover of the lagoon under the Treaty of Campo Formio. But the influence of the Venetian oligarchy over culture and politics has remained immense. From 1945 to about 1968, one of the most important of these influences was the Societe Europeene de Culture, based in Venice and directed by Umberto Campagnolo. The SEC operated freely in eastern and western Europe, and agitated against the nation state in the name of supernational values. The SEC launched the career of Franz Fanon, author of the Wretched of the Earth, whose ideas form a justification for terrorism. The premier foundation of the world is the Cini Foundation, which provides ideological directives for the far wealthier but junior foundations with names like Ford, Rockefeller, Carnegie, MacArthur, Volkswagen, etc.

**BEFORE BONAPARTE: THREE CENTURIES OF VENETIAN SUBVERSION OF FRANCE, 1500-1800**

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The War of the League of Cambrai proved that Louis XI's modern French nation-state was a threat to the survival of Venice. The Venetians wanted to destroy France. But how? Direct military force was out of the question. The Venetians therefore decided on a strategy of cultural and political subversion. This subversion of France between 1500 and 1800 by the Venetians has few parallels in modern history.

Of all the national cultures of the modern age, the French is the most prestigious. In culture, the Anglo-Americans provide trash for the mass market, but the French provide the luxury goods for the elite. In Asia, Africa, and Latin America, intellectuals and elites who are tired of MacDonald's look, above all, to France. French culture, however, has been polluted by centuries of unrelenting operations by Venetians like Paolo Sarpi and Antonio Conti and others. Century after century, the most famous French writers professed their admiration for Venice, and made their personal pilgrimage to Venice. Exceptions there are, but they are few and far between. As Machiavelli or Leonardo might have put it, "La culture Francaise e una porcheria Veneziana'': French culture is indeed a Venetian monstrosity.

British Prime Minister Robert Walpole gloated that "the French are ten times more idiotic than the British since they are so easily duped...." The French pride themselves on their knowledge and urbanity, on their glittering, cynical intelligence. They think they are true sophisticates and connoisseurs of intrigue. The worst thing that can happen to them is to be fooled. Well, the worst has happened, and the proud French are the dupes, fall guys, and suckers for the Venetians. British oligarchs who went along with the Venetians stood to gain. French oligarchs who went with the Venetians stood only to lose. The French are the pathetic losers.

The Venetians had been profiling the French since the Fourth Crusade of 1202, when Doge Enrico Dandolo duped the French feudal knights into capturing Constantinople for the Venetians. The old chronicles of Robert de Clari and Villehardouin show us something of the minds of the French dupes.

The heart of the Venetian cultural warfare after Cambrai was the no-soul thesis. Aristotle had taught that man has no soul. The Venetians taught the same thing. This is not theology, this is the essence of politics. The no-soul thesis means that man has no reason, man is an animal, man is a beast. But the soul is empirically there: You know it through creativity, through your own insights and discoveries, the fruits of which are permanent - immortal. You know your soul through love and charity and through your yearning for the good. If man is a beast, then the oligarchy and the empire are simply unavoidable. Venetians are materialists in this sense.

The no-soul thesis has technical names. It is called mortalism, annihilationism, thenetopsychism. All mean the same thing: no human soul. Around 1500, the University of Padua, the university of the Venetians, had a famous professor, Pietro Pomponazzi, warts and all. His doctrine was that there is no immortal human soul - in other words, that there is no soul at all. The whole person dies, body and soul. The main idea of what is called the Paduan school of Aristotelianism is that there is no human soul.

Around 1600, this was taught at Padua by Cesare Cremonini. When Cremonini died, he ordered a tombstone with the inscription: *Hic jacet totus Cremoninus* - "here lies all of Cremonini." The idea was that there had been no soul, and that all of Cremonini had gone into the grave. Pomponazzi and Cremonini exercised immense influence on France.

The no-soul thesis is the one infallible marker for a Venetian agent. Every Venetian agent, every Venetian asset, claims man has no soul, including Pomponazzi, Contarini, Cremonini, and Antonio Conti. In England, the no-soul idea was proclaimed by Venetian assets like Robert Fludd, Thomas Hobbes, John Milton, Cromwell's ally Sir Henry Vane, and various of the Cromwell- backed radicals including Richard Overton of the Levellers, Laurence Clarkson of the Ranters, Lodovic Muggleton and his Muggletonians, Gerard Winstanley of the Diggers, and Anne Hutchinson of Boston. Martin Luther had his own variation, that the soul slept until the last judgment. Every time you find the no-soul thesis, you have a Venetian agent, and generally also vice-versa.

The modern Venetian Party in France was founded by Paolo Sarpi (1552-1623), a no-soul Satanist and chief Venetian policy maker of the period around 1600. The best name for the Venetian Party of France is the cabal of the libertines. That is what they called themselves. Their creed was the no-soul thesis, mixed with various forms of Satanism and mysticism. To found the cabal of the libertines, Sarpi first needed a war of religion.

I have shown that Gasparo Contarini of Venice was the prime mover behind both Martin Luther and King Henry VIII, thus creating both Lutheranism and Anglicanism. Neither of these doctrines could be sold in France, so a new and more militant form of Protestantism had to be created. It featured total depravity and absolute predestination, and it came to be called Calvinism.

Calvin had to be taught how to create a synthetic religion. His teacher was Pierre Taisan de l'Estoile. This Pierre Taisan de l'Estoile was a Venetian operative; his son was an admirer of Paolo Sarpi. The younger de l'Estoile wrote in his Journal (after the Interdict crisis of 1606) that "Father Paul, the Venetian monk of the Servite Order... is, in my judgment, the one who has best and most sincerely written for my lords the Venetians.... The treatise of Paul Sarpi, a monk and professor of Venice, along with his other writings published at this time in support of the Venetians against the attacks of the Pope, are seen in Paris, and are praised and collected by all the men of character and learning.... Sarpi's life is even more persuasive than his writings, and make him admired and revered in Venice as a holy man and give a great weight of authority to his books." Thus wrote the son of Calvin's teacher. Calvin was a Venetian agent.

The French King at this time was Francis I, who had been in Spanish captivity after the Battle of Pavia in 1525 in the Cambrai Wars. Francis I was inclined towards a reasonable policy of peace and tolerance until 1534, the year of the so-called Placards Affair. The placards were leaflets with violent protests against the Pope and the mass, put up in numerous public places and on the door of the King's bedroom. Francis I went wild; 20 heads rolled, and Francis persecuted the Protestants. One of the provocateurs had been Jean Calvin, who had a previous arrest record for such actions. One of the victims of this operation had been Calvin's own brother, who was executed and buried under the gallows.

The greatest French writer, Francois Rabelais, opposed Calvin. In the fourth book of his *Gargantua*, Rabelais condemned the "little Calvinist demons and other impostors of Geneva."

Calvinism was directed much more against the King than against the Pope. The French Calvinists were called Huguenots, meaning confederates. When the Calvinists of Geneva became embroiled with the Catholic Duke of Savoy, these Calvinists, since they were Swiss, were called the *Eidgenossen*, citizens of the Confoederatio Helvetica, and, thus, confederates. For French speakers, *Eidgenossen* became Huguenots. Huguenots were drawn chiefly from the oligarchy; it is estimated that, around 1570, more than a third and possibly half of the French nobility were Protestant.

Huguenot ideology permitted a comeback for the French feudal barons who had been crushed by Louis XI. These barons had been fighting the central monarchy for centuries, and now they had a new ideology to rationalize their desire for civil war. Some oligarchs became Huguenots to spite their enemies who stayed Catholic. Many oligarchs wanted to determine the religion of their own peasants, as they could in Germany.

Admiral Coligny of the Huguenots called in the English, while the Guise, the leaders of the Catholic Party, called in the Spanish. Crushed in the middle was the state built by Louis XI, and crushed along with that state was the expiring Valois monarchy, a series of the sons of Catherine de Medici. Irrationality loomed large in daily life; this was when the seer Nostradamus acquired his reputation.

France had nine flare-ups of civil war between 1562 and 1598. The French wars of religion had no clear fronts and were marked by looting and raiding operations by groups of armed oligarchs on each side. All of the contending factions had leaders who were Venetian agents, and, as time went on, more and more were agents of Sarpi personally. Sarpi's main French operative was Arnaud du Ferrier, who had been the French ambassador to the Council of Trent. Du Ferrier used his notes on the council to help Sarpi write his most famous book, *The History of the Council of Trent*. Arnaud du Ferrier was in direct personal touch with Jean Bodin and Michel de Montaigne. Sarpi's friend, fellow monk, and biographer Fulgenzio Micanzio says that Sarpi was "intrinsichissimo" - extremely friendly - with Arnaud du Ferrier.

Among the Venetian operatives were:

**Michel de l'Hospital**, the Grand Chancellor of France during the 1560's. He advised Henry II, Francis II, and Charles IX. It was on his watch that the weakness of the monarchy allowed the Guise to open the hostilities of the civil war. Michel preached moderation and tolerance; he has been called the first *politique*. We can imagine what would have happened to the United States if Abraham Lincoln had made tolerance the supreme virtue. Michel grew up in a family marked by treason to France: His father was a retainer of Duke Charles of Bourbon, the Constable of France, who went over to the Emperor Charles V and died fighting for the Hapsburg empire during the Sack of Rome in 1527. Michel had studied at Padua for six years; he wrote a Latin ode glorifying Venice:

"Salve, Urbs antiqua, potens, magnaeque urbs aemula Romae."

Michel's career benefited from early sponsorship by the Guise. According to the Venetian ambassador Andrea Barbaro, Michel was always a secret Huguenot. Even so, Michel took King Charles IX on a tour of France, allegedly to build his popularity and stability. In practice, the impressionable young king was shocked to see many churches that had been destroyed by the Huguenots. During the same trip, Michel left the suggestible Queen Mother Catherine de Medici alone at Bayonne in the company of the Spanish Duke of Alba, the butcher of Holland for Philip II. It is thought that the bloody-minded Alba directly or indirectly provided the idea for the St. Batholomew's Day massacre of 1572.

**Philippe Duplessis-Mornay**, correspondent of Sarpi, was the leader of the French Calvinists after the death of Admiral de Coligny in 1572; his nickname was the Huguenot Pope. He had visited Venice at the age of 18. He was a direct correspondent of Sarpi. He was the finance minister and money man for Henry IV, who later dumped him in a process of rapprochement with the Pope.

**Jacques-Auguste de Thou** was in correspondence with Sarpi. He was taught by Scaligero and Cujas. He visited Venice in his youth, and went there again in 1589 to seek assistance as a minister of King Henry III. For five years, de Thou accompanied the future King Henry IV in his field campaigns during the civil war. De Thou helped to write the Edict of Nantes of 1598, which provided tolerance, meaning an armed Huguenot party in the state with its own armies and fortresses. At one time, de Thou was named ambassador to Venice. One of de Thou's books was a life of Jean Bodin. Another was a monumental Latin history of France in his time, parts of which were translated into French by J. Hotman de Villiers, a Sarpi correspondent. De Thou bequeathed his library to his relatives of the Du Puy family, and it became an organizing center for the cabal of the libertines. De Thou's son was part of the attempt to assassinate Richelieu by the Count of Cinq-Mars.

Tracing this network is easier if we recall that the Venetians first supported Henry of Navarre to become King of France as Henry IV and were the first to recognize him. The Venetians controlled Henry IV's advisers. When Henry IV refused to back Venice in the Interdict, refused to start a war with Spain, and attacked Sarpi as a heretic, Venetian intelligence assassinated Henry IV, the most popular king in French history.

Sarpi held his French Calvinist network in contempt. He wrote: "The heretics of France are for the most part bad men...."

After the 1572 massacre of Huguenots on St. Bartholomew's Day, there was a growing reaction against religious fanaticism. This was expressed by a third force called the *politiques*. The politiques are much misunderstood. They were not just fed up with religious fanaticism. Several of the politique leaders represented an early form of the cabal of the libertines under Venetian control.

The leading politique was **Jean Bodin**, the first *philosophe* and an intelligence agent who worked for the Duke of Alencon, the son of Henry II and for a time the politique candidate for the monarchy. Jean Bodin was a disciple of Contarini and of Pomponazzi. Jean Bodin was in close contact with Sarpi's friend Arnaud du Ferrier, as well as with Cecil in London. Bodin was involved in plots to kill Queen Elizabeth of England, and was the judge in a trial in which a woman was executed for sorcery.

His *Six Books of the Commonwealth* talks much about sovereignty, but this is not the modern concept of sovereignty. For the Venetians, the slogan of sovereignty was used as a device to create conflict between any given government and the Pope. Sarpi, for example, posed as the defender of Venetian sovereignty against Pope Paul V Borghese during the Interdict. The Jesuit Cardinal Bellarmino had proclaimed that all temporal rulers were subordinated to the supremacy of the Roman Pope. Sarpi became celebrated in all of Europe by arguing that the Pope could not interfere with the prerogatives of the sovereign state. King James I Stuart of England and Scotland, who claimed to get his divine right directly from God without any papal intermediary, was one of Sarpi's biggest fans. Telling the princes of the Holy Roman Empire that they were not really sovereign was also a great way to stir them up against the Hapsburgs. This close parallel between Bodin and Sarpi has been noticed by Italian writers including Federico Chabod and more recently Paolo Frajese.

Much of Bodin's book is also devoted to a weird theory of climate, which appears as a racist determinism. Northerners succeed by force, southerners by cunning; "... southern peoples are cruel and vindictive in consequence of their melancholy, which engenders extreme violence in the passions and impels men to take vengeance for what they suffer." And: "There is another very notable difference between northerners and southerners, in that the former are modest and chaste, and the latter very libidinous as a result of their melancholy temperament." Or: "northern races, or those who live in mountainous regions, are proud and warlike, relying on their physical prowess, and so they prefer popular states, or at any rate elective monarchies, and will not endure to be ruled by pretentious boasters." From such arid banality it is not far to Henry Kissinger's idiotic dictum that "history is not made in the South."

Bodin also talks of tolerance. As we can see in sixteenth- century England, tolerance often meant opening the door to gangs of Venetian madmen organized as religious sects. If Governor Winthrop of Massachusetts had caved in to Cromwell's pressure to tolerate these sects, North America might have become a madhouse for depraved sectarians. In any case, notice that Bodin's model for tolerance is none other than Gasparo Contarini, the Venetian patrician who started the Reformation and the Wars of Religion as a wartime measure against the League of Cambrai. Venice itself managed to be the most thorough totalitarian police state while at the same time tolerating the exercise of many religions.

The real Jean Bodin emerges in obscene relief in his long- unpublished Latin work, *Heptaplomeres*. (See Marion L.D. Kuntz [ed.], *Colloquium of the Seven about Secrets of the Sublime*, [Princeton, 1974]). There is no doubt that Jean Bodin was the author. The scene is Venice, famous for its atmosphere of perfect freedom, where a group of oligarchs discuss religion. They are Coronaeus the Catholic, Salomon the Jew, Toralba the naturalist or empiricist, Fridericus the Lutheran, Curtius the Calvinist, Senamus the skeptic, and Octavius the Moslem. According to some commentators, the tolerant Catholic Coronaeus "in several ways resembles the eminent Cardinal Gasparo Contarini." [Kuntz, p. xlv]

If Coronaeus acts as ireneic mediator, it is Salomon the Jew who emerges as the dominant figure. This is because he is able to draw upon the Cabala, the mass of mystical writings much fetishized by Bodin and Postel. Cabala is of course not a part of Judaism, but represented an entirely different polytheistic religion much inferior to Judaism itself. Octavius, a convert from Rome to Islam, is the resident expert on mummies and other exotic spiritual phenomena of the East. This is completely unfair to real Islam. Fridericus, the Lutheran, is also a great expert on demons. Toralba recommends reverence for God and following the laws of nature. Senamus, the skeptic, accepts no religion but at the same time rejects none.

What they all agree on is that mummies can stir up storms and have miraculous powers of healing, that the world is full of demons, and that true wisdom is to be found in the mysticism of the Cabala. They are interested in necrophilia, sing hymns to Isis, talk of Cabbalist Hermes Trismegistus, and praise Gasparo Contarini. The first sentence of the actual dialogue is, "Don't you think we have talked enough about the immortality of souls?" Voila: the Venetian party.

The dialogue is preceded by an introduction which sets the stage:

"You ask me in letters to write you about my foreign travel. Everything would have happened to my liking, if I could have taken delight in your companionship. If I shall ever meet with you again, I shall never allow myself to be separated from you. When we had a difficult time sailing along the coast of the Adriatic Sea, we reached Venice, a port common to almost all nations or rather the whole world, not only because the Venetians delight in receiving strangers hospitably, but also because one can live there with the greatest freedom. Whereas other cities and districts are threatened by civil wars or fears of tyrants or harsh exactions of taxes or the most annoying inquiries into one's activities, this seemed to me to be nearly the only city that offers immunity and freedom from all these kinds of servitude. This is the reason why people come here from everywhere, wishing to spend their lives in the greatest freedom and tranquillity of spirit, whether they are interested in commerce or crafts or leisure pursuits as befit free man." [Kuntz ed., p. 3]

There is also much praise for Cardinal Contarini, the Venetian intelligence chief of the Cambrai period:

"Fridericus: When, at the imperial Diet at Ratisbon the Emperor Charles V, in agreement with the German princes, had selected six most upright theologians of each religion to settle the religious controversies of the Romans and Germans ... they thought they should begin with the question of human justification. When in this discussion three theologians of the Augsburg Confession had drawn the Catholics, Pflugius, Fabrus, and Groppeus to their position and had likewise persuaded Cardinal Contarini, legate of the Roman See of this point of view, namely, that man is blessed by faith alone and by no merit of his own, Eckius, one of the Catholics, became so angry against his colleagues that the Catholic bishops and princes, convinced by him, forced Charles V to dissolve the discussion twenty days after it had begun.... Cardinal Contarini, the most learned Venetian patrician who was said to have agreed with the Lutherans, died a little afterwards, and it was strongly suspected that he died of poisoning." [Kuntz ed., 423]

It is no coincidence that Bodin puts this speech into the mouth of Fridericus, the Lutheran spokesman; Contarini was the founder of Lutheranism and assured the protection of Luther, through his agent Spalatin.

The first phase of the search for true religion in Book I of *Heptaplomeres* is centered on a discussion of the amazing powers of Egyptian mummies, as illustrated by the soi-disant Moslem Octavius, who tells of how he robbed a grave, stole a mummy, and tried to ship the mummy home by sea from Alexandria. He wanted the mummy because "there was so much healing power in these corpses that they warded off almost all diseases." After Octavius left Egypt, the ship on which he was traveling with the mummy was overtaken by a terrible storm. The terrified passengers began praying for safety according to Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Jewish, Moslem, and even Venetian rite customs. A Spanish soldier even tried blasphemy of the Christian God. But, Octavius recounts, all prayers and incantations were useless until the ship's captain threatened to execute anyone with a mummy in his baggage. At that point, Octavius surreptitiously threw his mummy overboard, and the storm calmed immediately. The captain later told Octavius that "the transportation of Egyptian corpses always stirred up storms and... that the nautical laws of the Egyptians scrupulously prohibited this." [Kuntz, 14]

The message is clear: All the monotheistic religions put together are no match for even one good old-fashioned mummy. Mummies were a favorite theme of Bodin's, since he also wrote about their powers in two of his other books, his 1580 *On the Demonomania of Witches* and his 1596 *Universae naturae theatrum*. With Bodin, we are not far from the later British intelligence stunt known as the "curse of King Tut's tomb."

From the mummies of Book I, Bodin moves on to the demons of Book II. Let us sample some of the exchanges:

"*Fridericus*: ... those who have been present when magicians assembled together agree if anyone uninitiated to demonic rites is brought there and shudders at the detestable devotions, suddenly with a clap of thunder the assemblage of demons and magicians is dissolved.... And just as the assemblages of soothsayers and the dire poisons of magicians smell of sulphur, so also those places in which lightning has struck are filled with the foulest odor of sulphur. We have observed that those fiery rocks made by demon's art smell of nothing but sulphur. Now, who is so blind that he does not see the actions of demons in the flashing of lightning.... the power of demons is also indicated when swords melt in an unharmed scabbard, when utensils burn in a closed and untouched cupboard, when the private parts lose hair though the skin is unblemished, when a wife recoils from the embrace of her husband. In countless actions which are most alien to nature, we must admit these things happen contrary to nature only by the force and power of demons or angels.

"*Curtius*: The ancient theologians identified three thunderbolts of Jupiter, namely white, red, black.... Since Pliny did not comprehend this, he thought that the white lightning fell from the body of Jupiter himself, an opinion too frivolous to deserve refutation.

"*Octavius*: I hear that Timurbecus, whom our people call Tamerlan, followed this method of imposing punishment....

"*Salomon*: Into their myths the Greeks wove the truth which they received from the Hebrews. They represented Juno as presiding in the air and hurling down avenging spirits from the midst of the air to keep them from flying into heaven. This indicated only that lesser spirits and demons were enclosed by their particular boundaries, to keep them from breaking out above the region of the clouds and were cast out by higher angels and powers and hurled down on the earth. By their fall they terrify mortals....

"*Senamus*: You have explained these matters elegantly and charmingly, but I do not know why demons pursue the bodies of Egyptians rather than Greeks or why they are accustomed to stir up tempests only when those bodies are stolen. Surely everyone knows that corpses are customarily carried on ships, sometimes to Asia, Greece, and even to Italy without a storm.

"*Fridericus*: But those corpses were not yet buried....

"*Octavius*: Perhaps demons envy men the salutary remedies which are recovered from those corpses of Egyptians. For they guard with unusual diligence the hidden treasures and kill those who dig them up.... George Agricola has many stories of this kind in which he relates that many people saw demons of pygmy size in the mines.... A long time ago, Apuleius, that greatest magician and poisoner, recalled this vexation. I find it strange, however, that no one who had sought a treasure with a demon's help had ever found it or was enriched with the find.

"*Curtius*: Surely by Roman law money is denied to those who search out treasures by means of detestable sacrifices or from any other forbidden art.

"*Fridericus*: The Chaldeans say their terrestrial demons, supposedly the guardians of treasures and corpses, are more deceitful and cruel because they are farther from the purity of light and divine knowledge....

"*Salomon*: The divine law wholeheartedly curses this impiety and mischief that magicians used and those who thus feast on blood with demons.

"*Fridericus*: But if those demons are the souls of wicked men who either had placed all their hope in their buried treasures secured from plunder,... let them pay just punishments with daily torment. Or demons may be the spirits of those who must pay the penalties for directing all their efforts to building palaces and towers with the blood of the people.... Finally, I do not doubt that impure spirits wander around the foul and loathsome regions and stir up storms and winds.

"*Toralba*: ...it was not without cause that Thomas Aquinas, famous even among physicists, wrote that demons stir up lightning and thunder.

"*Curtius*: Pliny and Strabo wrote something similar to this.... Plutarch thought that the causes of this extended silence [of oracles] must be attributed to the death of demons.

"*Senamus*: If demons disturb the visible sky, the seas, lands, fires, if they terrify men with thunder, lightning, winds, whirlwinds, earthquakes, and unexpected portents, if they hover over divine and human ambassadors, if then they regulate and overturn powers, states, cities, districts, families, finally if they are added to individual men as guardians and avengers, consider how great a multitude of demons and angels must be stationed up and down in all parts of the world and in individual places.... Fridericus has maintained that there were demons of each nature and sex, ephilates and hyphilates, in the unions of witches with incubi and magicians with succubi....

[...]

"*Coronaeus*: Senamus has proposed a very difficult but proper question. If Toralba will explain it with his usual care, he will render a great service not only to Senamus but to all of us.

"*Toralba*: ... since a discussion of the origin of angels and demons, their place, condition, and death seems far removed from positive proofs, surely we ought to seek an explanation of these things from the Hebrews, who drank divine secrets from those very fountains and sacred sources....

"*Salomon*: After our ancestors returned to Chaldea as prisoners, they became acquainted with many things by divine communication. However, we received nothing which has not been common knowledge throughout the world and available to everyone." [Kuntz, 83-89]

The "divine communication" which Toralba appeals to, and which Salomon declines to discuss is of course the Cabala. Of this latter Salomon says in Book III:

"Since that teaching is perceived only by hearing, it is called *qabbalah* (tradition). This is what Esdras meant when he said: 'Some things you will make common knowledge; others you will relate to the wise'.... In like manner, the sacred books were written in such a way that those things which pertain to the salvation of everyone, such as the decalogue and everything connected with it are easily understood by all.... The occult rites and sacrifices which have less to do with salvation are understood only by the learned, and the knowledge of natural mysteries, the Cabala, is understood only by the most learned." [Kuntz, 94-95]

In sum, we can see that all of the interlocutors of the Heptaplomeres, whatever their nominal religious affiliation, are Venetian cultist kooks. There is not one of them who stands up to confront the others with the plain fact that they are all wallowing in wild insanity and black magic.

As Jacques Roger wrote, "since he has assembled in his dialogue all the traditional arguments against the divinty of Jesus Christ, Bodin is a 'rationalist', probably a disciple of Pomponazzi.... The problem is that this modern thinker, this rationalist, firmly believed in demons and witches...."

Bodin was in a tandem with **Guillaume Postel**, the first Frenchman to read the Cabala and publish an edition of the Zohar, one of the classics of Cabala. Bodin and Postel shared the same patron; this was Gabriel Bouvery, Bishop of Angers, and nephew of Guillaume Poyet, Chancellor of France, who was Postel's paymaster by 1538-40. According to various sources, the discussions described in *Heptaplomeres* were not a work of fiction, but had actually taken place in Venice. Postel had attended them. The goal of the discussions had been to create a new, synthetic, syncretic, and satanic religion using scraps of the three monotheistic faiths. After Postel's death, Bodin got his stenographic notes and made them into the *Heptaplomeres*. Postel's Venetian seminar could only have been sponsored by the Giovani Party of the Venetian oligarchy, the party of the Ridotto Morosini salon attended by Paolo Sarpi. Postel's seminar was a founding constituent of the cabal of the libertines, the Venetian Party of France.

The goal of Bodin and Postel was to synthesize a new religion, as related by Antoine Teissier, *Eloges des hommes savants, tires de l'histoire de M. de Thou, avec des additions* (Leyden, 1715):

"Henri Etienne assures us that he saw Postel at Venice publicly proclaiming that if one wished to have a good religion, it would be necessary to compose a religion from those of the Turks, the Jews, and the Christians. Moreover, Mr. Naudé said that at the time when Postel was at Venice there were four men who gathered twice every week to discuss with complete freedom all the religions of the world, and that Postel wrote what took place in their discussions. After the death of Postel these writings fell into the hands of Bodin and became the material for the book entitled *About the Secrets of Sublime Things*...."

The same notion is conveyed by an earlier source, Diecmann's 1684 *De Naturalismo*:

"And so it was pleasing to arrange his whole scene with Bodin as chorus-leader so that any religion might be applauded more than the Christian religion, or that religion might be mingled by Samaritan confusion with Jewish and Turkish treachery; that he seems to have wished to unite himself clearly to the intention of his most insane citizen, Guillaume Postel, whom Henricus Stephanus heard saying publicly now and then at Venice that whoever wishes to fashion a form of good religion ought to blend this from those three - the Christian, Jewish, and Turkish religions. I am not at all deceived in this conclusion which I learned not so long ago from a French manuscript which mentioned that Guy Patin, physician and royal professor at Paris, had heard from Gabriel Naudé whom he knew very intimately, that there had been at Venice four men who had met twice a week for the purpose of establishing philosophical discussions about the various religions. Among those were Coronaeus of Rouen and the one whom I mentioned, Guillaume Postel, who acted as stenographer. His [Postel's] manuscripts, after he had died at Paris in 1584, came into the hands of Bodin and were used to complete this work." [Kuntz, p. lxi]

As for Postel, he tried to start a cult around that rarest of commodities, a 50-year old Venetian Virgin - in this case a certain Mother Zuana, a woman he found working among the poor at the Ospedaletto of Venice. Postel came under the influence of Madre Zuana during 1549-1550. Postel identified her with the *shechinah*, the cabalistic term for the female aspect of the deity. Madre Zuana's father confessor was a member of the Convent of St. Francesco della Vigna, which had previously been the base of operations of Francesco Giorgi, the relative of Contarini who had earlier moved to the English court as resident sex therapist for King Henry VIII. It is a safe bet that Postel imbibed the Francesco Giorgi version of Cabala and Rosicrucianism from Giorgi's old colleagues at St. Francesco della Vigna.

Later, in 1552, Postel claimed that the departed spirit of Mother Zuana had occupied his body through a mysterious process he called "immutation." Perhaps as a result, Postel became an early feminist. He was also Royal Lector for King Henry II of France and was close to the king, who died in a suspicious tournament accident which Nostradamus claimed to have predicted.

The exoteric ideas of the cabal of the libertines involved much verbiage around the idea of Nature. What was natural was good, what was unnatural was bad, etc. The state of nature was good, other states were less good, etc. St. Evremonde praised "la bonne loi naturelle." The world is ruled by blind fate, which is amoral and cannot be opposed. Wisdom is a matter of giving expression to one's own Nature by seeking enjoyment. Most of the so- called Enlightenment boils down to these few banal notions.

Parallel to Bodin, was **Michel de Montaigne**, the inventor of the essay form and the founder of the modern French ideology of the *honnete homme* - clever, urbane, cynical, skeptical, sensual. Bodin and Montaigne were linked by their common acquaintance with Sarpi's favorite Frenchman, Arnaud du Ferrier. Montaigne was close to Sarpi's correspondents DuPlessis-Mornay and de Thou, with the latter of whom he wanted to retire to his beloved Venice at the end of his life. Montaigne was Sarpi's favorite writer, especially for his essay on friendship with its homosexual overtones.

It is quite likely that Montaigne met Sarpi when he visited Venice in 1580. There is a tradition that Montaigne was on a diplomatic mission; he might have been representing his king or perhaps a faction on the French political scene. Some of Montaigne's ideas on magnetism are reflected in Sarpi's *Pensieri*. Later, Montaigne's disciple Pierre Charron wrote various tracts to popularize his master's point of view, and these writings of Charron also find their reflections here and there in Sarpi's notes for his neo-Aristotelian, neo-Ockhamite empiricist method.

Montaigne's motto was "Que sais-je?", what do I know? His answer reflected his pessimism about human knowledge and human creativity. Montaigne thought that even the "brutal stupidity" of animals assisted by their instincts could do better than "everything of which our divine intelligence is capable."

Montaigne's father had been a French soldier in the War of the League of Cambrai. The elder Montaigne had served with Lautrec; he kept a diary of his Italian years which has never been found. Montaigne's father had brought back from Italy a system of education supposedly endorsed by Italian humanists. The main idea was to speak only Latin around the child so as to make Latin the child's native language. Montaigne claims that he heard only Latin until he was six years old. Had the Venetians furnished the plan embraced by the elder Montaigne?

Montaigne wrote of cannibalism: While we think it is barbarous, many cultures think it is fine, so who are we to say? And, given our wars of religion, who are we to talk? "I think there is more barbarity in eating a man alive than in eating him dead; and in tearing by tortures and the rack a body still full of feeling, in roasting a man bit by bit... (as we have not only read but seen within fresh memory, not among ancient enemies, but among neighbors and fellow citizens, and what is worse, on the pretext of piety and religion), than in roasting and eating him after he is dead."

Antonio Conti's later assets, Montesquieu and Voltaire, paid tribute to Montaigne as the founder of their tradition. For two centuries, until the regime of Napoleon, the popularity of Montaigne in France survived, cutting across all changes in government or literary taste. Montaigne's "honnete homme" remains the foundation of the French ideology to this very day, a fact that helps to explain the political success of such creatures as Georges Pompidou, Giscard d'Estaing, "Tonton" Mitterrand, and Jacques Chirac.

Montaigne's partner was **Etienne de la Boetie**, another fanatical admirer of Venice. Only after de la Boetie died did Montaigne get married. Etienne de la Boetie wrote a praise of Venice in his *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*, a book which still elicits enthusiasm from Murray Rothbard and other libertarians of today: "Whoever could have observed the early Venetians, a handful of people living so freely that the most wicked among them would not wish to be king over them, so born and trained that they would not vie with one another except as to which one could give the best counsel and nurture their liberty most carefully, so instructed and developed from their cradles that they would not exchange for all other delights of the world an iota of their freedom; who, I say, familiar with the original nature of such a people, could visit today the territories of the man known as the Great Doge, and there contemplate with composure a people unwilling to live except to serve him, and maintaining his power at the cost of their lives? Who would believe that these two groups of people had an identical origin? Would one not rather conclude that upon leaving a city of men he had chanced upon a menagerie of beasts?"

Etienne de la Boetie died in 1563. His remarks on Venice correspond exactly to the general political line of the Giovani Party, the patrician association meeting in the Ridotto Morosini. The agitation of the Giovani was that the Council of Ten and its Zonta (or Giunta) had robbed the Venetians of their ancient liberties. The Council of Ten was the organ of government that supervised internal security, spying, and surveillance; it could and did conduct secret trials of patricians and sentence them to death. The Giovani demand was, of course, that the members of the Vecchi Party who dominated the Council of Ten should be ousted and replaced by Giovani, along with some other formal changes. The reform of the Council of Ten was carried out in 1582, and marked the transition to overall domination by the Giovani. Etienne de la Boetie's treatment of Venice shows that he was not only an admirer of the Venetian oligarchy, but also that he was a partisan of the Giovani Party specifically.

Montaigne wrote of his friend: "if [la Boetie] had been able to choose, he would have preferred to have been born at Venice than in Sarlat [near Bordeaux], and he would have been right." For his own part, when Montaigne crossed the Alps for the first time in 1580, his paramount goal was Venice. His travel journal notes that Montaigne "was saying that he would not have been able to stop at Rome or anywhere else in Italy and be at rest if he had not first seen Venice." The French writer who most distinguished himself in attacking Montaigne was Blaise Pascal.

Now for a few key figures from the cabal of the libertines over the centuries.

1600-1700

The Venetians sent **Giordano Bruno** to Paris. They later also sent **Vanini**, a disciple of Bruno. Vanini was accused of propagating the no-soul thesis and was burned at the stake, which spread sympathy for the libertines. Vanini's doctrine was that men were without souls and died in the same way that dumb animals do. At his trial, Vanini testified that he had attended a Naples meeting of 12 operatives dedicated to spreading atheism in Europe, and that he had been assigned France by drawing straws. Bruno has since had a following in France, including Cyrano de Bergerac, and later Fontenelle, the permanent secretary of the Academy of Sciences and an ally of Antonio Conti.

In the wake of Bruno and Vanini, a nucleus of libertine poets emerged in Paris. These included Maynard, Boisrobert, Tristan the Hermit, Saint-Amant, and Theophile de Viau. Among the poets of the same time, there was Desbarreax, who had studied with Cremonini. Close to him was Theophile de Viau, who was almost burned at the stake himself. This Theophile de Viau was reputedly a bisexual and for certain Descartes' favorite poet. The libertine poet Tristan was an imitator of the Italian pornographic poet Marino. In the same circles traveled the atheist and libertine Abbé Boisrobert, who, with the support of Richelieu, founded the Academie Francaise on the model of the Venetian controlled Aristotelian academies of Italy.

French intellectual life during the 1600's was often centered in salons, academies, and cabinets. The procedure of the Venetian Party was to establish or take control over the most prestigious and fashionable of the salons, and then use the hegemonic influence of these Venetian dominated leading salons to set the tone the lesser and provincial salons and academies were expected to follow. A prime example is the leading cultural academy of the early 1600's, the Academie Puteane. Its organizer was **Elie Diodati** of the infamous Calvinist Diodati family of Geneva, friends of Sarpi and controllers of Milton. Diodati was in direct touch with Galileo and hosted Milton during the latter's grand tour. During the first phase of the Academie Puteane, Diodati functioned as its secretary. Another member was Gabriel Naudé, who had studied with Cremonini in Padua and admired him as a "deniaise," meaning that Cremonini was an initiate who had seen everything. Naudé, who admired Cremonini's powers of deception, was Cardinal Mazarin's librarian, and anticipated several important ideas of Descartes.

A third member was the philosopher **Gassendi**, the dominant philosopher of the period from 1640 to 1660 in France. Gassendi taught an empiricism similar to Sarpi's. This included a material soul which was as rarefied as the simplest atoms, but material nonetheless. LaFontaine, whose fables imitated not just Aesop but also much more recent Venetian models, was influenced by Gassendi. Other Puteane activists included **Guy Patin**, a professor of medicine, and the skeptic **La Mothe le Vayer**.

Patin had a joke about the immortality of the soul: He said that he once asked a moribund patient to come back and report on the afterlife. Patin said that the patient had indeed come back, but had refused to speak, leaving him ignorant about the immortality of the soul.

When Gassendi went out of fashion around 1660, he was replaced by the notorious Rosicrucian **Descartes**, who was also steeped in the Cabala. When he was at college with the Jesuits, Descartes had been a pro-Galileo activist. The turning point in Descartes' intellectual biography was a series of three rapti philosophici, or philosophical trances, experienced on the night of November 10-11, 1619 in a heated room in a German village. November 11 was St. Martin's day, and St. Martin's eve was one of the great drinking bashes of the old Christian year - something like New Year's Eve today. The three dreams were the sources of Descartes' theory of vortices, among other things.

Descartes completed his own pilgrimage to Venice, and combined it with successful espionage for clients, including the French army of the Alps. Descartes visited the highly strategic Valtellina region of Switzerland, which was one of the nodal points of the Thirty Years' War, then in progress. The Valtellina was the territory of the Protestant Grisons or Grey Leagues, a land corridor which permitted direct communication between the possessions of the Austrian archdukes, on the one hand, and Spanish-occupied Lombardy and Milan on the other. It had been seized by the Spanish in 1619. Descartes, by then an expert in fortification and siege warfare, sent back such accurate reports that a French force was soon able to seize the Valtellina, severing the Austrian-Spanish communications. Naturally, all this was perfectly coherent with the anti-Spanish policy of the Venetians. Descartes arrived in Venice to see the traditional yearly ceremony acting out the marriage of the Doge to the Adriatic Sea.

Soon countergangs emerged with the announced purpose of countering the cabal of the libertines. An example was the Company of the Holy Sacrament, created in 1629 by the Duke of Ventadour. This was a secret society and included a pervasive spy network. Mazarin formally dissolved the Company of the Holy Sacrament, but its networks were still active as the "cabal of the devout" at the court of Louis XIV. The playwright Moliere, who was for a time the director of Louis XIV's entertainments, came into conflict numerous times with the cabal of the devout. Moliere, who was something of a libertine himself, satirized the religious activists in the figure of Tartuffe, the sanctimonious hypocrite who affects a mask of piety to pursue his often immoral goals.

After Richelieu died, the oligarchs rose up in rebellion against Mazarin under the leadership of the Cardinal de Retz, also a prominent author. This was the Fronde of 1650. Many rebellious nobles, like the Orleans, were atheists and libertines and frondeurs. Another famous frondeur was La Rochefoucauld, the author of the many cynical and worldly maxims.

Among the libertines of the second half of the 1600's, we find **Pierre Bayle**, the antagonist of Leibniz. There is also **St. Evremonde**, a veteran of the Fronde and the de facto libertine envoy to London. St. Evremonde's pose was that of the refined voluptuary. Under Louis XIV, libertines and atheists met at the Societe du Temple, where the dominant figure was the Grand Prieur de Vendome. Another center of the Venetian Party was the Palais Royal, controlled by the Duke of Orleans.

1700-1800

The cabal of the libertines, from the very beginning, had capabilities for espionage, assassination, and terrorism. A good example is the network of **Pierre Jurieu**, an espionage agent in the service of William of Orange active around 1700. The Public Record Office in London has thousands of pages of espionage reports from Jurieu's extensive network. Jurieu was a Huguenot minister and a translator of Paolo Sarpi. According to one commentator, "Jurieu made himself the tenacious defender of Calvinist orthodoxy. He refused any compromise, any relaxation, any tolerance. But this intransigence, which gives him a somber grandeur, also led him, by apparent paradox, to the most revolutionary theses. Jurieu severed the French Huguenots from any duty of obedience to the King; he thus legitimized insurrection and was one of the fathers of democracy, and one of the most obvious precursors of the spirit of 1789." (A. Niderst, Dictionnaire des Litteratures). Based on his reading of the Apocalypse, Jurieu announced that in 1689 both the regime of King Louis XIV and the French Catholic Church were going to collapse.

Jurieu on Sarpi: "...it hath pleased God in his Providence to raise up even in the Church of Rome, a wise, a moderate, a judicious and sincere man, one that in a word was the greatest man of his age, who hath carefully wrote this History. He has all the Perfections required to compleat an Historian...."

After about 1710, the Venetian networks of France were reorganized around Newtonianism by Antonio Conti. Conti worked with Montesquieu and Voltaire. Conti's later network included Buffon, Diderot, Condillac, and other leading lights of the celebrated French Encyclopedia.

Venetian operatives like Giacomo Casanova moved through the network of the cabal of the libertines. Casanova's mission for Venetian intelligence was to attack and undermine the regime of Louis XV. He was followed by the Venetian agent Cagliostro, who organized scandals that helped, according to Napoleon, to start the Revolution with the "queen's necklace affair," which generated widespread hatred against Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI. None of these operations could have succeeded without the cabal of the libertines, the ambient portrayed by Mozart in the "Viva la liberta" scene in *Don Giovanni*.

Finally, by about 1800, after three centuries of subversion, French society had been degraded to the point that Frenchmen were willing to submit to the dictatorship of a foreigner - of a Venetian. The cabal of the libertines had set the stage for the Revolution, the Terror, and for Bonaparte. France's most famous dictator turned out to be a post-1380 Genoese Corsican and therefore a de facto Venetian, revealing the open secret that so much of the dark side of French culture had been produced by the Venetians all along.

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**THE WAR OF THE LEAGUE OF CAMBRAI,
PAOLO SARPI AND JOHN LOCKE**

*From ICLC Conference panel titled: "The Axioms of the American System," Feb. 18, 1996; appeared in New Federalist, March 18, 1996*

Every person, whether he knows it or not, is a philosopher. Each of us necessarily develops a theory of how the world works. This theory is expressed as a set of axioms. The axioms are self-evident ideas that are recognized and accepted by everybody in sight. The axioms define human nature, the content of history, the workings of economics, the purpose of government, the goals of life. Today's American population operates according to axioms which are false, oligarchical - and suicidal. A dictatorship or a monarchy can get by with slaves or subjects, but a republic demands educated and capable citizens. Without citizens, a republic cannot survive. The most dangerous force in American life today is public opinion itself. In today's crisis, public opinion rejects out of hand all the urgent measures needed to promote national survival. This public opinion is stupefied by television and spectator sports and crassly manipulated by the news media. This depraved public opinion reflects not so much the admitted failure of political leadership as the degradation of the intellectual life of the average citizen. In the face of this kind of public opinion, world civilization as we have known it cannot long survive.

Is there a remedy? It must be to uncover the false axioms, uproot them, and replace them with the truth. History and philosophy are two powerful weapons in this fight against false axioms. The crisis of the citizen needs to be seen in a long historical perspective - we need to look at the five hundred years since the Italian Renaissance opened the modern era.

Before the Renaissance started about 1400, there was a discouraging sameness in most known forms of human society. Some were better, some were worse, but they were generally two-class systems: ruling elite and mass. The mass made up 95% of the population. They were peasants, serfs, and slaves, almost always laboring on the land, almost always illiterate and benighted. Their lives were nasty, brutish, and short. Over these peasants and serfs commanded a feudal aristocracy. Monarchy is bad enough, but most of the pre-Renaissance societies were something worse: they were small ruling classes called oligarchies. The aristocrats had military retainers, priests, scribes, and lackeys, making up at most 5% of the population. Under these conditions, world population potential was measured in the hundreds of millions, and even these were decimated by frequent plagues and famines.

Now and then a good ruler might appear, and did appear, along with excellent philosophers and scientists. But the oligarchy was always present, waiting to drag the society down again. Usury, constant warfare, slavery, racism, Aristotelian philosophy - these are the trademarks of oligarchy. Oligarchs come in many forms: the Roman senate, the barons of the dark ages, the Russian boyars, east European magnates, the French frondeurs, the princes of the Holy Roman Empire. Most of these feudal aristocrats were very ignorant, brutal, and crude. The medieval feudal aristocrats were easily manipulated by the Venetians, who had inherited the methods of Babylon, Rome, and Byzantium. From about 1000 AD until about 1600, the leading center of oligarchy in Europe and nearby Asia was Venice.

The first sustained breakout from this 2-class model came with the movement starting with Dante and Petrarch and culminating in Cusanus, Leonardo, and the Italian Renaissance of the 1400's. The high point of the early Renaissance was the Council of Florence in 1439, convened under the sponsorship of the Medici rulers of Florence. In addition to briefly re-uniting the Christian world, this council embraced the theology of the filioque. In political terms filioque meant that each and every human being is made in the image of God, similar to God, by virtue of possessing God-like qualities of intellectual creativity in the form of a human soul. Therefore the dignity of the human person had to be respected. The human mind was capable of scientific discovery, and also capable of creating the modern nation-state.

The impulse from the Council of Florence reached around the world with Columbus and the Florentine Amerigo Vespucci, the Medici envoy who gave his name to the new continents of the Americas. The same impulse of human progress reached into France, where King Louis XI used Florentine methods to create the first modern national state. This was a matter first of all of breaking the power of the turbulent feudal aristocracy. This was done with taxation, which also financed the beginnings of the modern administration. Louis XI had a social base in the commercial and manufacturing classes of the cities and towns - the origins of the modern middle class. As King between 1461 and 1483, Louis promoted industry and commerce, protected the rights of labor, enacted public health statutes, built infrastructure, drained swamps, and built up a national army. The population and prosperity of France increased accordingly. France was the first nation to reach the take-off point into the modern age.

French military power also grew. This was soon noticed by the new Tudor regime in England, as well as by the rulers of Spain. It was clear that the future belonged to the larger nation-states that were smart enough to imitate the methods of Louis XI. If the Louis XI model were to prevail everywhere, there was the hope that the oligarchs as a class might be crushed. The momentum of the Renaissance art, science, and statecraft might overwhelm all resistance and become unstoppable.

The Venetians, who had been waging their own war against Florence and the other Italian Renaissance states for a century, studied events in France carefully. Venice was essentially a city-state with an inland empire in northern Italy and a marine empire in the Mediterranean. At first the Venetians thought they could survive as a great power by playing off the new nation-states one against the other. As soon as Louis XI was dead, the Venetians invited his unworthy and inferior heir Charles VIII to conquer Milan. The French conquered Naples, Florence, and Milan, but their presence also drew in the forces of Spain. It was a time of rapidly shifting alliances. Before long, the main powers had all been antagonized by Venetian perfidy and geopolitics. For the Venetians had been filching territory on all sides, grabbing for every fly that flew by them.

What followed was the War of the League of Cambrai, the great world war that marked the opening of the modern era. If Venice had been destroyed in this war, the European oligarchy would have been deprived of its command center and is likely to have perished. Without Venice, we would have been spared the wars of religion, including the Thirty Years' War; we would have been spared the British Empire and most of its wars, including the American Civil War and the two world wars of this century. The same goes for most of the depressions and economic crises of these years.

At the heart of the League of Cambrai was the joint commitment in 1508 by King Louis XII of France and Maximilian, the Holy Roman Emperor, to divide the territory of Venice between them. The King of Spain joined in because he wanted to take Venetian possessions in southern Italy. A little later Pope Julius II della Rovere also joined the League. Julius II della Rovere was a professional soldier and an oligarch. He was called the *papa terribile*; his portrayal by Rex Harrison in the movie *The Agony and the Ecstasy* is much too kind.

But now the Venetians, the masters of geopolitics and encirclement, were faced in 1509 by a league of virtually all the European states with the exception of Hungary and England. In Venice, the Council of Ten assumed emergency powers. The program of the League of Cambrai was to expropriate all Venetian territory except for the city itself in its lagoon. By this time Venetian wealth derived more from its land possessions than from its ocean trade, so a loss of the land empire, or terrafirma, would have been a fatal blow. Among the French there were those who wanted to go further: the French general Bayard, whose courage is proverbial in France until this day, proclaimed his desire to destroy the Venetian oligarchy because of their opulent contempt for God and Christendom.

In the spring of 1509, a French army of 20,000 soldiers left Milan and crossed the Adda River into Venetian territory. On May 14, 1509 this French force met and destroyed an evenly matched Venetian mercenary army. The Venetians gave up Verona, Bergamo, Brescia, Vicenza, and even Padova, retreating into the natural fortress of their lagoons. The entire Venetian land empire had been lost in a single day. In one battle, Venice had dropped off the list of European great powers. The Venetians called it a "second Cannae." The Florentine secretary Machiavelli exulted that in one day the Venetians had lost the fruits of 800 years of aggression. The Venetians were able to retake Padova, but had to defend it against the German Emperor and 100,000 troops. The modern era had indeed begun.

Only twice before had the Venetians been in such dire straits. They had been besieged in the lagoons in 810 AD by King Pepin of France, the heir of Charlemagne, and again by the Genoese during the war of Chioggia in 1379.

To multiply the catastrophe, a few months before, the Venetians had received news of the naval battle of Diu in which an Egyptian fleet supported by Indian princes had been wiped out by the Portuguese navy. The old Venetian monopoly in the spice trade with the east was now a dead duck.

At first the Venetians, now under siege in their lagoons, were totally isolated. Then it turned out that they did have a friend: the new King of England, Henry VIII. Advised by Cardinal Woolsey and the Cecils, Henry VIII urged Pope Julius to betray the League of Cambrai, and ally with Venice. When Julius first found that Henry VIII was supporting Venice, he was furious. Julius told the English ambassador: "You Englishmen are all scoundrels." But soon it was clear that Julius was not so far from Henry's position. Henry also offered the Venetians a loan, and signed a friendship treaty with them.

Julius II della Rovere now switched sides, and by February, 1510 Julius was the ally of Venice in exchange for territorial cessions and some bribes. In the summer of 1510 the French and Imperial forces reached the lagoons a second time, but their flank was attacked by Julius, and Venice was preserved. Julius II must bear the historical responsibility of permitting the survival of Venice and thus of oligarchy into the modern world.

1511 brought a third Franco-Imperial offensive, which once again reached the shores of the lagoons. Now Spain followed Julius and joined the Venetian-Papal alliance against France and the Empire. Henry VIII also joined this Holy League as a pretext for attacking France.

In the spring of 1512 came a new shift: the Emperor Maximilian decided to join Venice, the Pope, and Spain against the French. The Venetians took advantage of this, re-occupying their battered land empire for the third time.

In February, 1513 Julius II della Rovere, who had made possible the survival of oligarchy into the modern world, finally died. About a month later the Venetians, desperately maneuvering to avoid being despoiled by their nominal allies, sealed an alliance with France. Venice now faced the attacks of the Spanish general Cardona. From the top of their bell towers the Venetians watched as the Spaniards burned the towns along the edge of the lagoon, and fired their cannon toward the city itself. Venice was on the verge of perdition for the fourth time, but Cardona had to retreat.

The war dragged on through 1514. In September, 1515 the French and the Venetians finally won the key battle of Marignano. After that only Verona remained in the hands of the German Imperial forces, and Venice and the Emperor Maximilian finally signed a peace in 1517. In the same year of 1517, a desperate Venetian wartime operation masterminded by Gasparo Contarini bore fruit when Luther nailed his theses to the door of Wittenberg cathedral. From this point on, religious conflicts between Catholics and Protestants in Germany and elsewhere would begin to relieve the immediate pressure on Venice. Venice was 5 million ducats in debt. For 8 years Venice had been devastated by the endless maneuvers of huge armies. Only the wars of religion, reformation and counter- reformation, saved Venice from being finally crushed.

Venice had survived. There remained the question as to how this small and weak state could hope to impose its oligarchical axioms on future humanity. Part of the answer was the metastasis of the Venetian oligarchical cancer to take over a large modern state. For this the Venetians eventually chose England, the power that had been most friendly during the late war.

But the roots of Venetian and Byzantine influence in England were much deeper. The Danish Viking invaders who opposed Alfred were instruments of the Byzantine Empire, whose influence reached Scandinavia along the Varangian way through Russia. The Norwegian army that invaded England in 1066 was commanded by a Byzantine general, Harold Hardrada. During the 1200's Henry III of England was bankrupted by loans masterminded by the Venetians. When Edward III started the Hundred Years' War against France around 1340, he was an instrument of Venice, since the Venetians wanted to prevent France from interfering with their wars against Genoa. The Wars of the Roses had been fought by factions manipulated by the Venetians, who viewed Wat Tyler's rebellion and Wycliff's Lollards as a dress rehearsal for Luther. Venetian factions were dominant at the court of Henry VIII. So the Venetians moved their family fortunes and their characteristic world outlook to England.

But the move to England and the creation of a British Empire were only part of the answer. As long as the forward motion of Renaissance science continued, the Venetians, the British, and all the others would be forced to imitate it and duplicate it, on pain of being militarily defeated. But the irrational domination of oligarchs could not coexist with continuous progress in science and technology. The Venetians could not simply attack science from the outside. They needed to seize control of science and corrupt science from within.

This task fell to the Venetian intelligence leader Paolo Sarpi, who lived from 1552 to 1623. Sarpi became one of the most famous persons in Europe through his role as Venetian propaganda boss during the Pope's Interdict against Venice in 1606-1607. Sarpi authored the assassination of King Henry IV of France in 1610. And, with the help of his assets at the court of Frederick V in Heidelberg, Sarpi was decisive in starting the Thirty Years' War, which killed half of the population of Germany and one third of the population of Europe as a whole.

Yet, Sarpi's most lasting achievement is the launching of the European Enlightenment, including both the Bacon- Hobbes- Locke- Newton- Berkeley- Hume English empiricism and the Descartes- Voltaire- Rousseau- French Encyclopedia school. Sarpi was one of the greatest corrupters of science and philosophy.

Sarpi was a Servite monk of modest origins who rose to be number two in his order. Early in life, he became an admirer of William of Ockham, one of the stupidest of the medieval nominalist philosophers. Sarpi was also a follower of Pomponazzi, the Venetian professor who argued that man has no soul.

Sarpi lived in Rome and knew the main personalities of the Counter- Reformation, including Carlo Borromeo, Roberto Bellarmino, Pope Sixtus V, and the future Pope Urban VII. Sarpi soon became a creature of the Contarini and Morosini families, who were committed to the Venetian metastasis into northern Europe. The Contarini- Morosini faction, called the Giovani party, became dominant in Venice during the 1580's. Sarpi became, in the words of the papal nuncio, the boss of half of Venice, and ran a salon for Calvinists and libertines which the Vatican attacked as an "academy of errors."

The leading British authority on Sarpi is H.R. Trevor-Roper, now Lord Dacre, who calls the friar an "indefatigable polymath" or master of all the sciences. In reality, Sarpi was the chief corrupter of modern science, the greatest charlatan of all time. It is his doctrines which are taught in the universities today.

In astronomy and physics, Sarpi was the case officer who directed the work of the Padua professor Galileo Galilei. Galileo wrote that Sarpi was a mathematician unexcelled in Europe, and contemporaries recognized that Sarpi had been the adviser, author, and director of Galileo's telescope project. Galileo's observations were done from Sarpi's monastery. The telescope itself had been invented by Leonardo. Galileo was until the end of his life a paid agent of the Sarpi group.

Sarpi also tried to build up a reputation as an expert on magnetism, which fascinated him because of its magical overtones. In this he was praised by G.B. della Porta, the author of *Magia Naturalis*. Sarpi was also famous as a mathematician, and probably wrote a treatise of mathematics which was lost when his monastery burned in 1769. Sarpi had studied the French mathematician Francois Viete. In anatomy, the Venetians attempted to prove for many years that Sarpi had been the first to discover the valves in human veins, and even that he had been the first to describe the circulation of the blood, well before Harvey.

Sarpi wrote *A History of the Council of Trent*, and his influence on historiography has been immense. John Milton is the English author who praises Sarpi at the greatest length. Milton used Sarpi as a major source, and praised him as the "great unmasker" of the papacy. Edward Gibbon, the author of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, was the leading historian of the British Venetian Party during the eighteenth century. In his great tome, Gibbon wrote: "Should Rome and her religion be annihilated, [Sarpi's] golden volume may still survive, a philosophical history and a salutary warning." Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay, the Venetian Party historian of the nineteenth century, was also an admirer of Sarpi. For today's Lord Dacre/Trevor- Roper, Sarpi was simply the greatest among all Catholic historians. So Sarpi was indeed a prodigy among oligarchs.

But what of Sarpi the philosopher? Sarpi never published a work of philosophy, but the Venetian archives were found to contain his philosophical manuscripts, the "Art of Thinking Well" (*Arte di Ben Pensare*) and the "Thoughts" (*Pensieri*), which were published in 1910 and again more fully in 1951. Here we find that Sarpi created the basis of modern empiricism. His method was to assert that scientific truth was to be found not in Aristotle, but rather written in mathematical characters in the great book of life. The way to get this truth was to use sense certainty, exactly as Aristotle had recommended. Many of Aristotle's specific conclusions could be junked, but his method and thus his overall domination could be preserved.

Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes both understood Italian. They and their protector, the Earl of Devonshire, corresponded with Sarpi and his group, with Hobbes doing the translation. Hobbes visited Venice in September, 1614 and probably met Sarpi. Bacon's inductive method is simply a bowdlerization of Sarpi.

Hobbes belonged to the Sarpi networks all his life. The plan for Hobbes' career as a writer emerged from his meeting with Galileo in 1636, when Galileo suggested that Hobbes write a book of ethics according to the mathematical- geometrical method. All his life Hobbes went around blathering that motion was the only thing that mattered. One of Sarpi's Pensieri reads: "From the weakness of man derives his characteristic of living in society, but from man's depravity derives the need to live under a supreme authority...." [405] This, along with Sarpi's favorite theme of church-state conflict, is the substance of Hobbes' *Leviathan*. When Hobbes lived in Paris during the English civil war, he rubbed elbows with Venetian assets like Mersenne, Descartes, and Gassendi. Hobbes and Descartes quarreled, but also partied together.

Then there is the question of Locke. Lord Macauley and other English writers treat Sarpi as one who anticipated Locke. In reality, Locke was a plagiarist of Sarpi. And for this we have the testimony of no less a personage than a mid-eighteenth century doge of Venice, Marco Foscarini. The doge writes that Sarpi's "Art of Thinking Well" is "the original from which Locke copied."

Locke's first book argues that the mind is a blank slate without any inborn or innate ideas. This meshes exactly with Sarpi, who with Aristotle and Pomponazzi tries to show that nothing enters the mind except through the senses. The corollary of this is that there is no human soul.

"Every body which moves operates on what it touches," is Sarpi's point of departure. Sarpi "shows how external objects operate on our senses, distinguishing between the object which creates the sensation and the sensation itself." The sensations we feel are not qualities of the objects, but phenomena of our intellect. The senses deliver the sensations through the nervous system. Then discursive reasoning or the active intellect comes into play with ideas of number and size. The discursive reasoning orders, combines, and compares sense-ideas which have been stored in memory.

This is all closely parallel to Locke's second book. In "Art of Thinking Well," Sarpi writes that "knowledge by experience is of greater certainty than knowledge through reason, and no reason can ever manage to equal experience." Locke's second book states that all our knowledge is founded on and derives itself from experience. Experience comes from sensation or from reflection, reflection on the sense impressions already stored in the brain. Sarpi also discusses reflection, distinguishing between cognition and later reflection on that same cognition.

Sarpi admits compound ideas, made up of more than one simple sense impression, and so does Locke. Sense impressions in general do not err, says Sarpi, although sometimes impaired vision and the like will cause distortions, and discursive reasoning can become confused. Locke's second book has similar remarks, with a discussion of color blindness. Both devote space to methods for fixing mistakes in processing sense ideas.

Sarpi argues that the intellect orders ideas according to notions of genus, species, and essence. For Locke, "all the great business of genera and species, and their essences... amounts to no more than this: That... men... enable themselves to consider things in bundles...." [II.31] From these bundles, Sarpi goes on to definitions and then to axioms (*ipolipsi*). Locke prefers to address axioms as maxims, and he argues that they are of limited utility, serving mainly to win debates. Sarpi is even more pessimistic, asserting that knowledge is actually harmful, and that animals are better off in their natural ignorance than we are.

Sarpi and Locke also agree on the value of syllogisms, which they also consider to be quite limited. Sarpi warns that syllogisms can often be perverse in form. Locke, wanting to show that he is fully modern and in no way a scholastic or schoolman, also denies every claim made for the syllogism - although he hastens to add that this does not in the least diminish the prestige of Aristotle.

Sarpi ends with some notes on language, saying that words were invented not to identify things, but rather the ideas of the speaker. Locke reproduces this argument in toto, stating that "...all words... signify nothing immediately but the ideas in the mind of the speaker." [II.32] Sarpi regards words as sources of confusion and errors, as does Locke.

Most of Locke's modern editors and biographers make no mention of Sarpi. But the catalogue of Locke's library shows a lively interest in the Venetian. Locke owned Sarpi's works in 6 volumes, Sarpi's histories of the Council of Trent and of the Inquisition, Sarpi's Italian letters, his history of Pope Paul IV, plus Micanzio's first biography of Sarpi, for a total of 13 books

Sarpi uses 22 pages, while Locke requires just short of 1000. But there is no doubt that Sarpi, whatever his obscurity, is the founder of modern British empiricism and as such the chief philosophical charlatan of the British Empire and the English- speaking peoples, including many Americans today. In this way, Sarpi has become the most popular and influential thinker of the modern world. The dead hand of Paolo Sarpi is reaching out of his sarcophagus once again, threatening to throttle world civilization.

**END**