

The Postwar British Coup Against Italy And the Contrary American Policy

*Giovanni Fasanella is the co-author, together with Mario J. Cereghino, of **Il Golpe Inglese** (The British Coup),¹ a book exposing the British destabilizations of Italy from 1924 to 1978, from the assassination of Socialist leader Giuseppe Matteotti, which consolidated the Mussolini dictatorship, to the assassination of Christian Democratic leader and former Prime Minister Aldo Moro. These events opened the way for the destruction of Italy's postwar political system. The book sold out three days after hitting the bookstands on Sept. 8, and a second edition is already being printed. Fasanelli was interviewed by Claudio Celani on Sept. 14. The interview was translated from Italian.*

EIR: Giovanni, you just published a book entitled *The British Coup*, which talks about a continuing coup, which has lasted 50 years, by the British Foreign Office, against Italy. How did you come to write that book?

Fasanella: Well, this is a “four-hands book,” written together with a competent archivist, Mario José Cereghino, an expert on British and American archives. The idea of the book is somehow the result of parallel work done by Mario and myself: Mario, through his researches in U.S. and British archives since the early '90s; and myself, through collecting witness reports in my books (I have written 12 books), reports by experts such as Giovanni Pellegrino, former chairman of the Parliament Investigating Committee on Terrorism Acts; Rosario Priore, a prosecutor who investigated major cases of political terrorism, such as the kidnapping and assassination of former Prime Minister Aldo Moro in 1978; the attempted assassination of Pope John Paul II and the Ustica case; and



Giovanni Fasanella

Alberto Franceschini, a co-founder of the famous terrorist organization Brigate Rosse [Red Brigades].

Through those witness reports, I tried to reconstruct the framework of many tragic events in Italy between 1969—the year of the Piazza Fontana bombing attack in Milan—and 1978, the year of the Moro assassination.

One of the central themes emerging from those reconstructions was exactly the background of the so-called “Mediterranean War,” i.e., the conflict among “friendly” countries over the control of the Mediterranean and the energy sources in the North African area and in the Middle East. Those threads had already emerged out of the seven-year-long investigation conducted by Pellegrino’s parliamentary committee; the same thread had emerged from some of Priore’s investigations—but it was a background that, although a credible and historically founded one, had no solid and conclusive documentary evidence.

Here we had the happy encounter between me and Mario, because Mario, a collaborator of the daily *Re-*

1. Mario José Cereghino and Giovanni Fasanella, *The British Coup: From Matteotti to Moro: Evidence of the Secret War for Control of Oil and of Italy*, Chiarelettere, 2011.

pubblica, had already found some documents for that newspaper, which he published a few years ago, on the British attempt to condition the course of Italian politics since the '50s and through the '70s.

This coming together between a journalist who had identified a key to read those events, and an archivist who had access to important documents—papers unknown, not because they were hidden or classified, but let us say because of ... laziness. And I do not say more. We found hundreds and hundreds of documents which we read, studied, catalogued, interpreted, and put in context. The impressive thing is that from those papers, that very thread that Priore and Pellegrino had identified came out very clearly: the British attempt to condition in every way, the course of Italian domestic and foreign policy, in particular its policy in the Mediterranean and towards the Third World.

Also the British hate came out, a hate against some protagonists of Italian history, particularly in the postwar period, who embodied a national spirit, and were less sensible to the influence, to the appeal of British “sirens” and the interests of that country. Those leaders tried to accomplish exactly those two things which Italy, according to the Churchill doctrine [British imperialism with a democratic face—ed.], was not supposed to do: namely having a fully democratic political system and an independent foreign policy, especially in that area of the Mediterranean world, based on the identification of its own national interest.

Those political figures were considered by the British, in the judgments emerging from the documents, as mortal enemies. Enrico Mattei² [the founder of Italy’s oil industry, who was killed by a bomb placed on his plane in 1962], is even characterized as a “wart” in the British diplomatic papers. Therefore, mortal enemies of global British interests, to be eliminated with all means.

The U.S.-British Conflict

EIR: Through the documents, the book allows a reconstruction of Italian history which is revolutionary in respect to established mythology, often fed by the Left,

2. See Claudio Celani, “Mattei and Kennedy: The Strategic Alliance Killed by the British,” *EIR*, June 5, 2009.

which says that everything bad and threatening to Italian independence and freedom came from the United States—

Fasanella: No doubt.

EIR: —including the so-called “strategy of tension,” whose history must be rewritten, because you put it in the context of what happened in the Mediterranean area in 1968-69.

Fasanella: Yes. This book, I repeat, is entirely based on British archive material, of course, integrated with other documents and information, and clears away many fairytales spread by leftist pseudo-historiography in the last 30-40 years, i.e., the idea of a large, uninterrupted conspiracy steered by the Capital of Evil, Washington, aimed at preventing the Communists from taking power in Italy by using any means—even terrorist massacres, attempted coups d’état, and political assassinations.

Well, the book clears up, in a quasi-definitive way I would say, this theory, which had never been supported by serious documentation. Not that there was never any responsibility, here and there, in the United States; but it is one thing if some elements of the United States had a role in those developments, another thing would be to say “America as such”—its administrations, its Presidents, its diplomacy, its intelligence, and all its institutions—played this dirty game in Italy.

No: Instead, from the papers, a conflict emerges which nobody in Italy had suspected could exist, between the United States and Great Britain. Their views of the Italian issue, including the Communist problem, did not always coincide; on the contrary: Most of the time they were in contrast, starting with the status that Italy should be given after the end of the Second World War. For the Americans, we were a “co-belligerent” country, i.e., a country that, through the armed Resistance, had freed itself from the dictatorship by fighting besides the Allied armies. For the British, instead, we were a country defeated in war, and therefore subject to the rule of the winners, Great Britain in the first place.

These two conflicting views between America and Great Britain have had effects throughout the history of the following decades, because in the most dramatic phases, contrary to the mythology I referred to earlier,



the United States was on the other side. America, different from the British, is the country that has prevented Italy from falling into a dramatic vortex, and its democratic system into collapse.

For instance, through the documents, we have the evidence that [former Fascist leader] Junio Valerio Borghese, who attempted the famous coup d'état in 1969, was a British agent, although he also had contacts with some U.S. agents. And the Borghese coup attempt, planned with British support, was blocked at the last moment precisely by the Americans.

In other circumstances, during the '70s, when Christian Democratic leader Aldo Moro pushed for a democratic evolution of the Italian Communist Party in view of its possible election victory, you cannot say that the Americans wanted the PCI in the Italian government, but they had another view of the Communist problem: They were less obsessed than the British, because the Americans counted on a slow democratic evolution of the PCI, and promoted it in all ways—secretly, of course.

Whereas, for the British, the PCI was a mortal enemy, just like Aldo Moro's Christian Democratic Party, and like Mattei. For the United States, when the problem of the PCI entering the government arose in the '70s, it was certainly not seen as a reason to uncork the champagne bottles; but it was viewed as a problem that could be solved by limiting Italy's ability to have access to the most sensitive NATO secrets. For the British, as you can read in their own records, the problem must be solved in a radical way, even through a military coup.

In 1976, for one entire year, British diplomacy, its intelligence services, and its armed forces (and this emerges from the Defence Secretary papers), had planned a military coup to be implemented in Italy to prevent the "historic compromise" between Moro and PCI leader Enrico Berlinguer. That plan, organized in detail for one whole year, and submitted to other NATO countries (the U.S.A., France, and Germany), was eventually dropped because the Americans were not enthusiastic about it; they considered it to be a dangerous initiative. There was also resistance from Germany and Giscard d'Estaing's France.

Facing the problems and obstacles coming from NATO member-countries, the British dropped the project of a military coup d'état and chose a Plan B, which they characterize explicitly in their papers as the support for a "different subversive action." We are in December 1976: Less than one and a half years later, Moro was kidnapped and assassinated.

Italy Emerges as a Postwar Power

EIR: Since you mentioned the 1968-69 period, could you briefly draw a picture of the strategic context of the Piazza Fontana bombings, followed by the Borghese attempted coup?

Fasanella: We are between the end of the '60s and the beginning of the '70s. The British, after Mattei's death, realized that the problem had not been solved, because the leadership of the Christian Democratic Party, the Fanfanis, the Moros, etc, wanted to continue Mattei's energy policy, and therefore ENI [the then-state-owned oil company, headed by Mattei] continued its activity in the world, greatly disturbing the British interests.

But in that Summer of 1969, something happened, which I would call decisive, from the standpoint of resetting the balances of power in the Mediterranean. Qaddafi, a young Nasserian officer in the Libyan Army, trained in Italian military academies, took power through a coup d'état.

That coup, and the ensuing new Libyan regime, was, for the British, a real catastrophe. Their military bases in Libya were closed, their oil interests were lost, especially in Cyrenaica, the region where the British had old historical roots [the pro-British King Idris, whom Qaddafi overthrew, came from Cyrenaica]. And therefore, the coup in Libya closed the circle, a cycle we might say, because the British, having already been kicked out of Egypt after the nationalization of the Suez Canal, had lost influence in Iran and in the Middle East, as well as in many raw materials-rich African countries.

If you open a geopolitical atlas to see what happened in Africa between 1957 and 1962, you see that 32 countries got rid of British and French colonial regimes. Therefore, the coup in Libya was somehow the seal on that process, the final outcome of that process of downsizing British interest in the Mediterranean area, in the Middle East, and in Africa. Of course, the French, too, experienced something similar, and they too, afterwards, played a role in Italian events.

Mattei's policy first, and Moro's policy after, had turned Italy into a real point of reference for those emerging countries. The British did not forgive us for that, and their records and their analyses show with extremely strong evidence, the fact that Italy, which they had always considered as a sort of British protectorate, a marginal, non-influential country not to say even worse, had become, instead, a middle power, hegemonic in an extremely important area of the world, such as the Mediterranean, Africa, and some parts of

The British role in the destabilization of Italy between 1924 and 1978 is exposed in the Cereghino-Fasanella book. Especially horrifying was the 1969-78 terrorist rampage known as the Strategy of Tension, bookended by the Piazza Fontana bombing in Milan, and the kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades. Right: Moro, in captivity, before his brutal assassination; below: the Milan daily, *Corriere della Sera*, headlined, "Horrendous Massacre in Milan; 30 dead and 90 wounded."



place around which to build its identity and its own national interest. It has increasingly lost position and prestige at the international level, reaching the epilogue in the last days.

What happened in Libya is what the British and the French dreamed of accomplishing, at least since the beginning of the '70s—unsuccessfully. They managed to kick Italy out of that area, and to put their hands on the wealth of that country, de facto partitioning Libya ex-

actly as was done soon after the war, into two areas of influence: Cyrenaica to the British, Tripolitania to the French.

EIR: We must say that today, the role of the United States is quite different. . . .

Fasanella: Yes, because the U.S.A. today is much weaker. While Italy could grow, thanks also to the support of the United States, which saw in our country the possibility to contain French and British expansionism, today Italy, without prestige, strength, and without a credible leading class, is no longer able to play the role that America seems to have assigned, actually, to France and Britain. And this is a sign of extreme weakness on the side of the U.S.A. I have the feeling that France and Britain have somehow plotted to weaken the positions and the prestige of the United States of America.

A Clash Between Two Visions

EIR: I am sure our readers, especially policymakers, in America, will get the message.

The last question: Among the many British figures meddling with Italy, who appear in your book, is a certain William Rees Mogg, a journalist who then became editor of the *London Times*. In the '90s, he wrote that it is not worth educating 95% of the population; it is enough to educate the top 5% to run society.

This embodies the oligarchical model, a view of the world and of society that has always informed British policy in its strategy of world domination. The Italian political class of the postwar period, on the other side, has another, opposite view, embodied by Mattei and

the Middle East—not to mention Latin America.

Thus, the British faced the problem of how to deal with this Italian policy; of how to warn the Italians that they had trespassed across a boundary they should have not trespassed in any way. This was the limit imposed by the 1943-45 Churchill doctrine, eventually formalized in the 1947 Peace Treaty. Italy, defeated in the war by the British, had become a modern country, touching, between 1969 and the early '70s, the highest point of its influence: the fifth-largest economic power, leaving Britain behind, and had become the hegemonic power in this area. This, the British could not tolerate.

EIR: What is going on today? The British and the French have come back to Africa. . . .

Fasanella: After Moro's death, all the targets the British wanted to achieve had been achieved in some way, because Italy has fallen into ever-deeper crisis. Since the death of Moro, Italy has become a more and more divided country domestically, hardly finding a

Moro. In this sense, between Britain and Italy, we see not a competition between two “wills of power,” but between two systems. Do you agree?

Fasanella: Absolutely, yes. There is a clash between two visions: On one side, there is a vision that sees politics as the engine for development of nations, and this vision is embodied by the ruling classes of Italy in the immediate postwar period. These were ruling classes of a high cultural-political level, who, even in facing strong domestic opposition, as during the Cold War (Italy had the largest Communist Party in the Western world), never lost their view of the national interest, i.e., of the need to hold together the unitary fabric of the country as a base on which the political system should grow, evolving towards a mature democracy.

The public sector of the economy, the “*industria di stato*,” was one of the great insights on the part of that national political class, and although they had enemies at the political/ideological level, those adversaries found a compromise at the economic level, and established a compromise between a Marxist and a free-market view of the economy, around the role of the state industry.

Therefore, a “*stato imprenditore*” [entrepreneurial

state], as the historian Benito Livigni, one of the closest collaborators of Enrico Mattei, describes it: an entrepreneurial state which was able to counterbalance the presence of a private sector such as the Italian one, a largely oligarchical, family-centered (in the sense of aristocratic families) sector, often connected to foreign interests, almost always to British interests.

Therefore, there is a clash between these two visions; and it is not an accident that today, the attack by these oligarchical circles—or let us better characterize them as technocrats, financiers—is an attack on politics as such, because they need to completely destroy the political forces, political institutions, in order to have total control over nations, including Italy.

And that is what has happened in the last years in Italy. We are witnessing an attack against politics—and politics often deserves it—but we see a rage, an insistence, a violence, in the way this attack is carried out; and this, of course, does not indicate a desire for the improvement of Italian public life, but rather, the aim of wiping out politics, in order to replace it with financial circles, the so-called technocratic governments which represent the interest of those oligarchies.

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