

**«Watch Italy»: A Confidential Report on Italian Affairs by C.D. Jackson
(August 1962)
by Giacomo Mazzei**

Abstract: The online digitized collections of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library hold a treasure-trove of historical documents relating, among things, to the Kennedy White House's policy on Italy during the height of that country's postwar "economic miracle", the formation of its first Center-Left governing coalition, and the transformative papacy of John XXIII. The present relatively overlooked document, an August 1962 report by Cold War strategist and long-time publishing executive C.D. Jackson, from President Kennedy's office files, offers a poignant example of American views of Italy at that juncture. Jackson's involvement in Italian affairs intersected with the activities of the Pro Deo international university, an institution with close ties to the Vatican and the CIA, funded at the time by both American and Italian businesses. The document, therefore, springs from state-private networks of the kind that played a pivotal role in Cold-War transatlantic relations. This is also one of several reports on the many different countries that Jackson visited that summer. Those other reports, which too are held at the Kennedy Library and are accessible on the Internet, would deserve scrutiny as well.

Keywords: John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, US-Italian Relations, Cold War, Transatlantic Networks, C.D. Jackson, Pro Deo International University.

In the summer of 1962, Time Inc. top executive C.D. Jackson, formerly a key mastermind of psychological warfare in the Eisenhower administration, embarked on a two-month world tour stretching from western Europe to Southeast Asia, with stops in North Africa, the Middle East, and India. Accompanied by his wife Grace on a trip that was part business, part leisure, and relying for arrangements on his company's worldwide network of representatives and correspondents, this consummate publicist, businessman, and establishment insider met informally with foreign leaders – among them, heads of state and government – and an array of diplomatic officials and military brass stationed at US posts overseas. On the way back home, he sent seven well-crafted reports about those visits and high-level conversations to close associates of his. The reports were also forwarded by the Washington bureau chief of *Time-Life* news service, John L. Steele, to President Kennedy via his Press secretary, Pierre Salinger, «on a personal and confidential basis». In the fourth of the series, a ten-page document dated August 7, Jackson dealt with the situation in Italy, where he stayed between July 3 and 11¹.

That report is cited in a major study by Alessandro Brogi on Cold-War politics and US intervention in France and Italy, and in another one by Adriana Castagnoli on US-Italian economic relations during the Cold War. Brogi reads it in the context of the Kennedy administration's growing support to the so-called *apertura a sinistra* (opening to the left), namely the inclusion of the Italian Socialist Party in the governing coalition led by the Christian Democrats, and he briefly discusses Jackson's urging to «watch Italy» as the Catholic Church, then on the eve of the Second Vatican Council, renovated itself under the papacy of John XXIII, in ways that promised to benefit the Center-Left experiment already in the making. Castagnoli, who quotes more extensively if somewhat haphazardly from the report (and erroneously presents it as if written for the president's eyes only), underlines how Jackson considered Italy as outstanding among Western European countries in terms of business ventures abroad, citing Jackson's account of a brief exchange regarding the state-owned oil and gas conglomerate ENI, one of the main drivers of that dynamism, during a conversation he had with the leader of the Socialist Party, Pietro Nenni. Moreover, Castagnoli too refers to Jackson's marked attention to the Church and, in particular, to its influence on the developing countries of the Third World, and she mentions as well how that, along with Italy's newly found economic prowess, could yield in his view precious «suggestions» to US

¹ Overseas Report (Confidential) #4 from C.D. Jackson, Italy, August 7, attached to John L. [Steele] to Pierre [Salinger] undated, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, Boston, Massachusetts (JFKPL), John F. Kennedy Presidential Papers (JFKPP), President's Office Files (POF), box 119a, folder Italy General 1961 [misfiled], accessible at <<https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKPOF/119b/JFKPOF-119b-001>> (accessed: November 28, 2022), also in Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, Kansas (DDEPL), C.D. Jackson Papers (CDJP), box 112, folder World Trip, Reports mailed, 1962; Travel Schedule – Mr. Mrs. C.D. Jackson, undated, DDEPL, CDJP, box 112, folder World Trip, 1962.

policymakers, although he did not discount the inherent dangers of such circumstances. Both Brogi and Castagnoli attach some importance to the report, especially the former, who ties it directly to the opening of a diplomatic channel between the Kennedy White House and the Vatican «to monitor the potential connection between the Church's new orientation and the Center-Left in Rome»².

I would like to invite further and closer attention to this document, which provides an interesting snapshot into American visions of Italy at the time, given Jackson's unique access to the upper echelons of power in the United States and allied countries as well as his many interests and skills – he had long been privy to national security concerns and had stood at the center of propaganda campaigns, cultural initiatives, and transnational networking since the 1940s, as we shall see, and he was also a fairly compelling and entertaining writer. This is not to overstate the document's relevance to US policymaking, as perhaps does Brogi. Despite the quality of the report, it may not have had the impact that he seems to suggest on the drawn-out maneuvers that eventually resulted in Washington's greenlighting of the *apertura*. After all, Jackson did not belong to the Kennedy crowd, even though he maintained links with senior government officials and leftovers from the previous administration, and, more importantly, there is no solid evidence available to establish that his report was discussed in any depth at the White House. Whether it shaped in some way or another Kennedy's views of the Italian situation, or those of some of his aids and advisors to whom it might have been passed along, remains a matter of guessing³. This caveat aside, Jackson, while providing information on leading Italian politicians that could in fact prove useful, was above all able to capture some of the fundamental aspects of the extraordinary ferment occurring in and around Italy at the peak of its postwar "economic miracle" and inside the quarters of the Holy See, shaken in those days by John XXIII's unconventional yet forcible leadership. Furthermore, Jackson did that eloquently, mixing synthetic analyses with captivating sketches and vignettes, a humorous touch that reflects the remarkable self-confidence of this once much-influential worldly figure, and makes for a pleasant reading.

Charles Douglas Jackson – better known as C.D. – was a New Yorker born from wealth and gifted Princeton graduate who joined Henry Luce's *Time-Life* publishing empire in the 1930s, to become Luce's trusted personal assistant and later a vice-president of Time Inc., the managing director of *Time-Life International*, and the publisher

² A. Brogi, *Confronting America: The Cold War between the United States and the Communists in France and Italy*, The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill 2011, p. 241; A. Castagnoli, *La guerra fredda economica. Italia e Stati Uniti, 1947-1989*, Laterza, Roma 2015, pp. 96-97. Brogi cites the report similarly also in a later essay, *Taming Dissent: The United States and the Center-Left in Italy, 1958-1978*, in «Journal of Transatlantic Studies», v. 14, n. 3, 2016, pp. 213-236, quotation at p. 221.

³ It is worth noting that Jackson's report is not mentioned in the two most authoritative studies of US policy towards the Italian Center-Left government formula. Cf. L. Nuti, *Gli Stati Uniti e l'apertura a sinistra. Importanza e limiti della presenza americana in Italia*, Laterza, Roma 1999; U. Gentiloni Silveri, *L'Italia e la Nuova Frontiera. Stati Uniti e centro-sinistra, 1958-1965*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1998.

of *Fortune* and *Life* magazines. After starting his parallel career of media-savvy political handyman in 1940 as president of the Council for Democracy, a public relations outfit countering Charles Lindbergh's isolationist American First Committee, Jackson then served as deputy chief of the Office of War Information and was deployed to North Africa with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) during World War II. By the war's end, he contributed to founding the Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, to help form a new cadre of US liberal internationalists, and was the president of the National Committee for a Free Europe, and creator of its broadcast service Radio Free Europe, at the onset of the Cold War, working in concert with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to fight the battle for the Europeans' hearts and minds. His finest hour, however, came as he entered the inner circle of foreign policy advisors to President Eisenhower, of whom he was also a productive speechwriter. Active in the Eisenhower administration most notably in its early years, though he would gravitate around the White House throughout Eisenhower's time in office, Jackson participated in meetings of the National Security Council and was a major influence at the Operations Coordinating Board, which spearheaded the administration's psychological warfare programs. Called at one time «chief of the Cold War» by Czech Communists on Radio Prague⁴, he championed liberating Eastern Europe from Soviet domination in line with Eisenhower's call to "rollback" the Iron Curtain. All along he collaborated as well with business organizations, such as the powerful Advertising Council, was one of the prime movers of the Bilderberg Group, which brought together prominent Americans and Europeans in off-the-record discussions of global issues, teamed up with the deans of modernization theory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Center for International Studies, and was a patron of the arts and behind-the-scene promoter of the intellectually high-minded, CIA-funded Congress for Cultural Freedom⁵.

The versatile, ubiquitous Jackson was the «prototypical "quiet American"» and had a distinctive Machiavellian talent for «political artistry and adventure», according to Ned O'Gorman, who places him next to foremost "containment" architect George Kennan, Eisenhower's secretary of State John Foster Dulles, and Eisenhower himself

⁴ V. Ingimundarson, *Containing the Offensive: The "Chief of the Cold War" and the Eisenhower Administration's German Policy*, in «Presidential Studies Quarterly», 27 (1997) 3, pp. 480-495, quotation at p. 481.

⁵ J.A. Stern, *C.D. Jackson: Cold War Propagandist for Democracy and Globalism*, University Press of America, New York 2012; H.W. Brands, *Cold Warriors: Eisenhower's Generation and American Foreign Policy*, Columbia University Press, New York 1988; K. Osgood, *Total Cold War: Eisenhower's Secret Propaganda Battle at Home and Abroad*, University Press of Kansas, Lawrence 2006; H. Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 2008; T.W. Gijswijt, *Informal Alliance: The Bilderberg Group and Transatlantic Relations during the Cold War, 1952-1968*, Routledge, London 2018; N. Gilman, *Mandarins of the Future: Modernization theory in Cold War America*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2003; F. Stonor Saunders, *The Cultural Cold World: The CIA and the World of Arts and Letters*, The New Press, New York 2000; W. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961*, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 1997.

as a framer of seminal strategic worldviews, or “spirits”, as O’Gorman puts it in his study of US policymakers’ rhetoric and belief systems at the height of the Cold War. In O’Gorman’s interpretation, Jackson best articulated a kind of adventurist style that resonated with Luce’s ideal of an “American Century” and was deeply rooted in the nation’s history, combining down-to-hearth pragmatism with evangelical righteousness and a yearning for heroic gestures. In addition to that, O’Gorman sees Jackson as a transitional historical character who, following the US failure to act in the 1953 and 1956 uprisings in East Berlin and Hungary, morphed the doctrine of “liberation” into a mission to propagate free enterprise and liberal politics, and thus helped carry the lineage of the Marshall Plan forward onto the Kennedy administration’s developmental drive in the Third World, embodied in such projects as the Alliance for Progress in Latin America. Indeed, Jackson – always a staunch Cold Warrior and zealous anticommunist – grew increasingly estranged from the Kennedy administration over time, resenting what he perceived as its inclination to give up on Eastern Europe. And yet, somewhat ironically albeit not at all surprisingly, Jackson’s final act, before dying in September 1964, was to preside in no small part over the public handling of Kennedy’s assassination. It was Jackson’s *Life* magazine that purchased all the rights to the now-famous 8mm Zapruder film, by far the best moving-picture documentation of the assassination, and showed a short, highly sanitized, carefully edited selection of its frames within days of the president’s death. *Life*’s version of the film fed into the official narrative recounted by the controversial Warren Commission, which counted former CIA director and Jackson’s old-time ally Allen Dulles among its members. The Commission issued its final report less than a week after Jackson had died of cancer at the age of sixty-two⁶.

Over the course of his on-and-off tenure under Eisenhower, and afterwards as a still well-connected actor in state-private networks, Jackson was regularly involved in Italian affairs. He was closely associated with the strengthening of covert anticommunist measures in Italy at the beginning of the Eisenhower administration, aided and abetted by the newly appointed US ambassador in Rome, Clare Boothe Luce, Henry Luce’s wife, and though Jackson was replaced at the helm of the psychological warfare framework when the hardliner approach gave way to a softer one around 1955⁷, he continued to actively follow the unfolding of at least one previously launched operation. Since 1953 he and the Luces had supported Rome’s Pro Deo international university, a fledgling academic institution led, with the approval of the Vatican, by Belgian

⁶ N. O’Gorman, *Spirits of the Cold War: Contesting Worldviews in the Classical Age of American Security Strategy*, Michigan State University Press, East Lansing 2012, quotations at pp. xvi, 147; Id., *The Iconoclastic Imagination: Image, Catastrophe, and Economy in America from the Kennedy Assassination to September 11*, Chicago University Press, Chicago 2016, pp. 72-73, 83, and *passim*.

⁷ Cf. M. Del Pero, *L’alleato scomodo. Gli USA e la DC negli anni del centrismo (1948-1955)*, Carocci, Roma 2001; A. Brogi, *Ambassador Clare Boothe Luce and the Evolution of Psychological Warfare in Italy*, in «Cold War History», 12 (2012), 2, pp. 269-294.

Dominican Father Felix Morlion. Founder of a namesake anti-totalitarian movement in the 1930s, Morlion had long-standing ties across the Atlantic, including with US intelligence, having fled during World War II from Nazi-occupied Europe to the United States under OSS protection. Upon his return to liberated Rome in 1944, he set up a school of mass communication providing training to Catholic organizers and anticommunist activists, and in 1948 founded the Pro Deo, which focused its courses on social sciences with a strong American bent and later started a few offshoot programs in Latin American countries while at the same time fostering dialogue between Catholics, Protestants, and Jews⁸. Jackson funneled money from Luce to the Pro Deo, which also received funding from the CIA and other businessmen who joined the Luce-backed, inter-faith Pro Deo's affiliate association in the United States, the American Council for the International Promotion of Democracy Under God. And it goes without saying that throughout the years Morlion functioned for the US intelligence services as both a conduit to, and a source of information on, the inner workings of the Vatican⁹.

By the time Jackson visited Italy in July 1962, the Pro Deo was undergoing significant expansion thanks to growing interest by large business concerns. Earlier that year it received a sizable grant from Standard Oil for its educational projects in Venezuela and fresh funding from Italian firms such as the automaker and chemical giants FIAT and Montecatini, whose involvement in the Pro Deo dated back to the mid-1950s. During the visit, Jackson, who often worked as an intermediary between the Americans and Italians supporting the Pro Deo and had secured clearing from the Kennedy administration in advance, met with the managing director of Montecatini, Carlo Faina, among other industrialists¹⁰. None of that features in his report, which deals first with the economic and political situation in Italy and then, more extensively, with the state of affairs in the Church, but there are clear echoes in it of the kind of precepts that were spread through the Pro Deo.

The report starts off as a continuation of previous ones on Great Britain, France, and West Germany, presenting a cursory overview of what Jackson called the «totally uninhibited» business practices of the Italians, with his words betraying outright admiration for the feats of these modern times “condottieri” of industry and commerce as compared to their European competitors. He laid down a list of items to prove his point and mulled over the Italians' seeming ease at doing business in places like North Africa or the Middle East despite their recent colonial past. He then moved onto consider the «more complex and considerably more dangerous» subject of Italian politics. He told of the apparently lively conversation that he had had with Nenni, «one of the

⁸ In this respect, it might be worth recalling that both Jackson and Henry Luce were Presbyterian, whereas Clare Boothe Luce was a fervent Catholic convert.

⁹ V. Aubourg, “A Philosophy of Democracy under God:” C.D. Jackson, *Henry Luce et le mouvement Pro Deo (1941-1964)*, in «Revue Française d'Études Américaines», 107 (2006), pp. 29-46.

¹⁰ Ivi, pp. 34, 38-39.

most disarming old rascals I have ever met», he quipped. Jackson was one of the few distinguished Americans that the Socialist Party leader had recently met after a breakdown of relations that had lasted for over a decade¹¹. It is likely the two were able to converse comfortably without the aid of an interpreter, Nenni having been an antifascist exile in France during Fascism and Jackson an accomplished student of French literature back in his days at Princeton who understood some Italian as well, but the American visitor was left with the impression of «double-talk» on the part of his interlocutor. This is a feature that he attributed – a bit condescendingly – to most politicians in Italy, with the notable exception of the leader of the Liberal Party and member of the Bilderberg Group, «our old friend» Giovanni Malagodi. The latter was an opponent of the Center-Left coalition, but Jackson thought very highly of him and believed that he would fully express his potential if he were to change his current «negative» stance into a «positive» one.

About two-thirds of the report are dedicated specifically to the Church politics and the exceptional personality of John XXIII, including a vivid description of the two papal audiences – one public, the other private – that Jackson attended as a Pro Deo board member, an opportunity that allowed him to study the character and even the physical traits of the pope, on which he lingered in his writing just as he would when it came to describe the other world leaders that he met during his lengthy trip. «The most interesting part of the Italian scene is what is going on in the Vatican», he stated plainly, before adding some passing remarks about the contrasting reactions that the pope's unorthodox public persona and novel, impassioned attitude towards human suffering were generating among Catholics in Italy. But Jackson was much more concentrated on the international dimension of the pontificate, which clearly in his mind should follow the lead indicated by the Pro Deo to meet the pressing challenge of developing the Third World. Significantly, he wrote:

[T]oday's priest, today's monsignor, today's bishop and archbishop, today's cardinal, today's pope must not only have his doctorate in theology but also in the social sciences in order to be a dynamic part of the lives of Catholics all over the world who are suddenly emerging from agriculture into a neo-industrialization and urbanization and all that that implies.

¹¹ In the preceding months Nenni had met with US Democratic Senator Hubert Humphrey, Kennedy's special assistant Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and the labor leaders Walter and Victor Reuther of the United Auto Workers. Those meetings were part of an informal diplomacy helping the gradual rapprochement carried out by the Kennedy administration, and they also paved the way to the meeting that Kennedy himself would have with Nenni during his state visit to Italy in early July 1963. Notwithstanding his skepticism about Nenni's posture, Jackson was probably associated with these tactics devised by Schlesinger and few other strong supporters of the *apertura* in the administration, including the deputy National Security advisor and preeminent modernization theorist Walt Rostow, who too had been an advisor and speechwriter to Eisenhower and was a close, likeminded collaborator of Jackson for many years. L. Nuti, *Gli Stati Uniti e l'apertura a sinistra*, cit., *passim*; N. O'Gorman, *Spirits of the Cold War*, cit., pp. 143-144, 156-162.

Jackson seemed to have hopes that the Church would move in that direction and perhaps he felt reassured by the pope's blessing of Pro Deo activities during his private audience with him. To be sure, it is quite evident that Jackson grasped the full implications of such a course of action from a political standpoint, and in fact he underscored the risks that it posed globally in the confrontation against communism, yet he suggested that it might well turn the Church into a «tremendous weapon on the side of Freedom». He reiterated the same concept as he alluded to the promise of an unprecedented outreach to Protestants and Jews at the forthcoming Second Vatican Council, an event to which he looked forward with great anticipation. Considering all that as well as the changes taking place in Italy politically and economically, he therefore put repeated emphasis on his urging to «watch Italy», to not disregard it in favor of other, more established allied countries «in terms of crises and problems». There was a level of uncertainty, and many things could go wrong, but there was also the distinct possibility that Italy and, within it, the Church of Rome might actually prove to be invaluable assets. He thus concluded:

[O]ut of this ancient country may come quite unbeknownst to us, not unbeknownst but unnoticed by us, the thing, the element, the ally that we are all looking for. So I repeat, don't overlook Italy.

This was by no means an isolated point of view among Americans at the time, though Jackson's narrative undoubtedly conveys a peculiar sense of excitement. Italy, which received massive aid under the Marshall Plan and other US-led programs and had been negotiating American influence to find its own path to postwar modernization and spur growth in its underdeveloped Southern region, the Mezzogiorno, was now trying to act as a model for developing countries and as donor itself. It was encouraged to do so by the US government even as there were qualms in Washington about the Italians' commitment to these goals while certain initiatives, particularly those by ENI, raised concerns¹². The application of hard theory to matters of political and economic development, moreover, had been a fixture of US foreign-policy thinking since at least the mid-1950s and reached a climax during the Kennedy years, with steps taken to promote the social sciences in Italy in conjunction with its new foreign aid policies and with the Center-Left's reformist efforts. Other actors too operated in the state-private networks, notably the richly endowed Ford Foundation, which bequeathed grants to the economic think tank SVIMEZ for the training of experts from developing countries, and to forward-looking constituents of the Center-Left milieu such as the publishing house Il Mulino and the Olivetti typewriter company, which

¹² E. Calandri, *Prima della globalizzazione. L'Italia, la cooperazione allo sviluppo e la guerra fredda, 1955-1995*, Cedam, Padova 2013; E. Bini, *La potente benzina italiana. Guerra fredda e consumi di massa tra Italia, Stati Uniti e Terzo mondo (1945-1973)*, Carocci, Roma 2013; S. Lorenzini, *Ace in the Hole or Hole in the Pocket? The Italian Mezzogiorno and the Story of a Troubled Transition from Development Model to Development Donor*, in «Contemporary European History», 26 (2017), 3, pp. 569-588.

instituted a foundation of its own¹³. Italy was already being “watched” and Jackson, who must have been aware of those dynamics at play, pushed his agenda accordingly, but he certainly gave his angle on events with some gusto. Overall, his positioning did not square neatly with the more boldly progressive take on Italian politics that was gradually prevailing in the Kennedy administration, which tended to favor relations with lay Catholics and left-leaning liberals working constructively towards the Center-Left alliance, like those financed by the Ford Foundation and unlike, for instance, the rather conservative Malagodi. The pointed appraisal of Italian business ventures that Jackson provided along with the testimony of his rare meeting with Nenni, and most of all his first-hand account from the Vatican, and the added speculation on future scenarios for the Church’s teachings, were nonetheless informative and quite convincing in putting Italy squarely on the map.

What Jackson could not anticipate, however, was the outbreak of the Cuban missile crisis shortly thereafter, in October 1962, with John XXIII’s full-hearted public appeal for world peace during the crises, delivered in accordance with wishes from the White House as well as the Kremlin, and the opening of a direct channel of communication between the Vatican and Moscow in the wake of the crisis, to advance negotiations over the Limited Nuclear Test Ban Treaty that was eventually signed by the United States and the Soviet Union in August of the following year. And, in this high-stakes juncture of the Cold War, none other than Father Morlion served as troubleshooter for the Holy See, by facilitating contacts with the American journalist, renowned peace activist, and emissary to both Kennedy and Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev, Norman Cousins. In this context, moreover, the Second Vatican Council, which first convened just a couple of days before a US reconnaissance aircraft spotted Soviet missiles being deployed in Cuba, became a venue for mutual understanding between the Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church, pointing to a normalization of Soviet-Vatican relations after decades of enmity. As a result of these fast-changing events, prelude to an easing of tensions along the Iron Curtain that fueled Jackson’s estrangement from the Kennedy administration, his and Luce’s rapport with Morlion soured. It further deteriorated over the next few months, due to their dissatisfaction with what they perceived as the accelerating Italianization of the Pro Deo, a trend that coincided with Morlion’s gradual distancing from his American patrons. By April 1964, the American Council for the International Promotion of Democracy Under God had closed its offices in New York and Jackson had resigned from it. His death, in September of that year, then brought the collaboration between Time Inc. and the

¹³ M. Granata, *Planning in Cold-War Italy*, in «Journal of Modern Italian Studies», 27 (2022), 1, pp. 63-91; F. Bello, *Fabio Luca Cavazza, la Nuova Frontiera e l’apertura a sinistra. Il Mulino nelle relazioni politico-culturali tra Italia e Stati Uniti (1955-1963)*, Giannini, Napoli 2016; G. Gemelli, *The Origins of the Olivetti Foundation and the Development of Social and Political Sciences in Italy during the Sixties*, in Id. (ed.), *The Ford Foundation and Europe, 1950s-1970s: Cross-Fertilization of Learning in Social Science and Management*, European Inter-university Press, Brussels 1998.

Pro Deo to an abrupt end¹⁴.

By then, other relevant changes had occurred in Italy. Beset by inflationary pressures, the economic miracle took a sharp hit in 1963-64, when the Italian central bank forced a credit crunch to stymie those pressures. The resulting lull in business activity did not last long, but in the meantime the buoyancy of earlier years had diminished. As for the fortunes of the Center-Left, Kennedy's assassination prompted, in December 1963, the long-awaited formation of a government that included Nenni's Socialist Party, but financial instability, coupled with veiled threats of a military coup by right-wing opponents, soon weakened the new government's reformist thrust¹⁵. Seen in this perspective and in light of the new course of the Catholic Church initiated by John XXIII and carried on after his death, in June 1963, by his successor Paul VI, Jackson's report appears as a sort of testimony to American expectations about Italy – not fully optimistic but generally hopeful, especially in the case of “adventurers” like Jackson – at a fleeting moment, and immediately prior to an inflection point, in postwar Italian history. That, I submit, is what makes it interesting.

Finally, it would be worth considering an investigation into each of the other six reports that Jackson filed during his 1962 world tour, or perhaps, even better, a study of all the reports taken as a whole, including the one examined here. As noted at the outset, Jackson, who departed the United States on June 10 and arrived back on August 10, traveled extensively and had meetings with top political figures during that trip. He was first in London, where he joined the British Tory prime minister Harold Macmillan at Downing Street for a friendly one-to-one chat, met also with the leader of the Labor Party, Hugh Gaitskell, yet another fellow member of the Bilderberg Group, and attended a luncheon of the American Chamber of Commerce addressed by the dynamic, budding leader of the Liberal Party, Jo Grimond, to whom, incidentally, he favorably compared the Italian Malagodi. Right afterwards he was in Paris and Bonn, to meet with French prime minister Georges Pompidou and German chancellor Konrad Adenauer on the eve of a state visit to France by Adenauer that would turn out to be a steppingstone towards the signing, a few months later, of the historic Élysée Treaty between France and Germany. Following his next week-long stop in Italy, he then travelled to Tunisia and Iran, where he met with Tunisian president Habib Bourguiba and the shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, before heading further East, to India, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Japan. Of special importance

¹⁴ V. Aubourg, “A Philosophy of Democracy under God,” cit., pp. 40-41; A. Pietrobon, *Norman Cousins: Peacemaker in the Atomic Age*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore 2022, pp. 191-204; A. Rocucci, *Moscow and the Vatican's Ostpolitik in the 1960s and 1970s: Dialogue and Antagonism*, in András Fejérdy (ed.), *The Vatican “Ostpolitik”, 1958-1978. Responsibility and Witness during John XXIII and Paul VI*, Viella, Roma 2015, pp. 69-74.

¹⁵ On this rather crucial political shift, cf. L. Nuti, *Gli Stati Uniti e l'apertura a sinistra*, cit., pp. 655-75; P. Craveri, *La Repubblica dal 1958 al 1992*, UTET, Torino 1995, pp. 154-181; M. Franzinelli, *Il piano Solo. I servizi segreti, il centro-sinistra e il “golpe” del 1964*, Mondadori, Milano 2010.

in the Far-East leg of the trip were Jackson's meetings with long-time Chinese Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek, in Taipei, and Japanese prime minister Hayato Ikeda, in Tokyo, as well as the thorough inspection that Jackson carried out of Quemoy, the fortified Taiwanese island located but a few miles off the coast of mainland China. The subjects of those several meetings ranged from the admission of Great Britain into the European communities to the legacy of World War II in Western Europe, from the popularity of African charismatic leaders such as Bourguiba to Taiwan's readiness to defend itself from an invasion by the Chinese People's Liberation Army, to name a few. Among Jackson's portrayals of the political leaders that he met, that of the Iranian shah is particularly noteworthy. The prose in all reports is free from the bureaucratic jargon that often burdens embassy dispatches and memoranda, or other official diplomatic documents. They were probably written with some haste, hence the occasional slip and redundancy, but they are nonetheless – or precisely because of that – remarkably fluent and straightforward. Jackson received a number of responses to his reports, which, aside from reaching the White House, circulated widely within a circle of selected acquaintances. Those responses, too, would merit consideration¹⁶.

¹⁶ The other six reports, from London, Bonn, Tunis, Tehran, Quemoy/Taipei, and Tokyo, are in JFKPL, JFKPP, POF, box 127, folder United Kingdom: General, 1962: July-December; box 116b, folder Germany: General, 1962: May-August; box 125, folder Tunisia: General, May 1961-November 1963; box 119, folder Iran: General, 1961-1963; box 113a, folder China: General, 1962, respectively, and also in DDEPL, CDJP, box 112, folder World Trip, Reports Mailed, 1962; box 113, folder World Trip, Reports Mailed, 1962. To access the digitized version of these reports provided by the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library, see the finding aids for JFKPP, POF at: <<https://www.jfklibrary.org/sites/default/files/archives/JFK-POF/JFKPOF-FA.xml>> (accessed: November 28, 2022). The responses to the reports are in DDEPL, CDJP, boxes 113 and 114.

17a.

OVERSEAS REPORT (CONFIDENTIAL) #4 FROM C. D. JACKSON

Italy, August 7

In addition to politics and business, which are the principal concerns of resurging Europe, the Italians have a third. Three things are uppermost in Italian conversation this summer, namely politics, business and the Catholic Church.

Let's take business first. While the big countries like the United States, Great Britain, Germany and France have been going around the world competing with each other, the Italians have very quietly and, apparently with much greater flexibility, been grabbing off important chunks of business. They seem to be totally uninhibited as to who they do business with or what kind of business it is.

ITEM: Italy's economic plan for 1963 is to step up trade with Russia four-fold.

ITEM: An Italian Commission went to South Korea about ten days ago to negotiate for the manufacture of two hundred, repeat two hundred, fishing boats to be sold to South Korea. The boats will be built by the famous Ansaldo works, with Fiat diesel engines. The South Koreans want to pay them in fish; the Italians want to be paid in dollars. It will probably wind up partly fish and partly dollars, but I would bet mostly dollars.

ITEM: The Russians have made a deal with Fiat to put up a tractor plant in Russia and to run it. The target is to produce one hundred thousand farm tractors per year.

ITEM: The famous Italian synthetic fiber company, Snia Viscosa, is going to set up a nylon or rayon plant in Russia.

ITEM: The Tunisians decided that they would like to have a refinery at Bizerte, and opened the project for bids. Everybody bid -- the Germans, the Americans, the British, everybody who knew how to build an oil refinery. Who got the contract? The Italians, through Mr. Mattei, who underbid everyone.

And so it goes all over the place. One of the fascinating elements involved is that although Italy was a colonial power like all the rest of them, in fact a much more recent colonial power than France or England or Holland, and became a colonial power through some fairly brutal methods like the Ethiopian War, in spite of all of this the people around the Mediterranean on the African and Middle Eastern side simply do not consider Italy an ex-colonial power and they have a tremendous advantage. I would not be at all surprised if Italy did not become the dominant business nation around the African and Middle Eastern rim of the Mediterranean, extending all the way into Somaliland and even Ethiopia.

The political side is more complex and considerably more dangerous. When the Christian Democrats made a coalition deal with Signor Nenni's Socialists, the idea was that this would force Nenni to break cleanly with the Communists and therefore move to the right. This was known for the Christian Democrats as the *apertura a sinistra*, namely the opening to the left. Although all the returns are not in yet, it looks as though the Nenni Socialists were pulling the Conservatives left, rather than pulling away from the Communists.

Every day, every week the Italians look for a sign that Nenni has made some kind of clean break with the Communists. That sign has not yet been made. Instead, the Italian Government has agreed to nationalize the electric utilities in Italy, which is regarded, and I believe quite correctly, as the political payoff for Nenni's Socialists joining the government coalition.

I had quite a talk with Mr. Nenni. He is one of the most disarming old rascals I have ever met. He is perfectly willing to make jokes at his own

expense. He has charm. He has humor. He has experience and he conveys a quality of excitement.

I asked him if his Socialists were going to nationalize anything else else in Italy. He said that there were no immediate plans to do so; they would have to digest the electrical nationalization first. I asked him how he felt about Mr. Mattei's monster state corporation, which was the equivalent of Socialistic nationalization only under another non-Socialist label. Nenni replied that naturally he could not disapprove of any of these state business actions of Mattei's. However, in his experience he had seen that such enterprises led by such a man generally set themselves up as a power independent of government, whether conservative or socialist. I jokingly asked him if the next thing he should nationalize might not be Mr. Mattei. He laughed but did not answer.

The Italian politician who seems to make the most sense, without double-talk and with a quite clear analytical sense of what is going on, is of course our old friend Giovanni Malagodi, the leader of the Liberal Party. He has a tremendous opportunity ahead of him if he will seize it. Although he is not old, he conveys an impression of being somewhat tired and not eager for any tough political fracas. A number of Malagodi's friends feel that if he were to step out of the traditional Italian political mold and campaign with a fresh vigor on the issues that he knows so well, he would be able to get a large number of seats in the Chamber of Deputies and become a real force.

Today he is a force, but only negatively. They want him to become a positive force. He is sort of the Jo Grimond of Italy but infinitely more experienced and intelligent, with a far clearer sense of what is involved.

The most interesting part of the Italian scene is what is going on in the Vatican. By great good luck and thanks to my position as a member of the

board of the interdenominational International University for Social Studies, "Pro Deo", I had two audiences with the Pope. The first audience was a public one in St. Peter's Basilica. The second is what is known as a private one, or semi-private. There were not more than ten people in the room at the time.

Rome Catholic society and a number of politicians are torn between what they detect going on in the Vatican. The conservatives, or black Catholics consider that the Pope has turned to the left. Some of them frankly used the phrase "has gone Red". Others feel that he is doing extremely well, that he is doing what had to be done and what was going to prove the current salvation of that tremendous mechanism all over the world.

From having had this wonderful opportunity to observe John XXIII on these two occasions, I can quite see why the ultra conservatives are alarmed, the ultra conservatives both within the Church and among the laity. This man is strictly un-Orthodox in his behavior. His dogma may be impeccable but his methods of communicating it are frequently unusual and must be the despair of the monsignor assigned to watch over him.

For instance, let us take the audience in St. Peter's. There were several thousand people present, assembled from all over the world. They came in groups ranging from half a dozen people to several hundred, representing cities, countries, religious orders, organizations, etc. At the appointed hour the Pope appeared, sitting on his throne carried aloft on the shoulders of his uniformed bearers. A solemn procession around the altar, which is in the center of St. Peter's, and then the throne is gently lowered to the ground.

Even to a non-Catholic, it was a profoundly impressive, and in fact moving, spectacle to see this human being dressed in white toward whom the eyes and minds and hearts of all of these people were being extended in almost adoration and certainly total respect. In other words, this was not a man. This was

the Pope of Rome, John XXIII, direct apostolic descendent of St. Peter. He slowly rose from his portable throne, walked up a few steps and sat down on another throne, which is situated back to back with the altar in the center of St. Peter's. A microphone with a flexible arm attached to each arm of his chair was swiveled around so that it was in front of his face. And he began to talk.

I should have said earlier when I was describing his procession borne aloft around the altar that as he passed each section of people, a strong ripple of applause would break out, real human and not awed hand-clapping. In fact, they almost cheered and the sound followed him around the altar. He had no piece of paper in front of him, no notes, no nothing. He just started to talk and he talked for about twenty minutes.

During these twenty minutes, by some subtle personal magic, he became not Pope John XXIII, awesome, aloof, austere, intellectual, as was his predecessor; he became a very human being, the friend, sort of the uncle, of everyone in the church. It was rather difficult to follow what he was saying in Italian because the loudspeaker system made so much reverberation that I would frequently get lost. But he must have made at least three if not four wisecracks because all of a sudden the entire Basilica would break into genuine, wholehearted laughter.

When he was through, a monsignor with a marvelously rich Irish brogue gave a quick translation in English of what the Pope had said. Similarly, in German by another monsignor. Then the Pope himself spoke briefly in French. His French is excellent but with a pronounced Italian accent.

He then rose, left the assemblage, descended from his throne, once again mounted the portable throne, was lifted to the shoulders of his bearers and the procession around the altar took place again to the strong and enthusiastic applause of the assemblage. This man knows how to talk to people, to

get them on his side, to understand the ideas he wishes to promulgate. Conversely, if any monsignor had the responsibility of preparing the text or the notes for what the Pope was expected to say, his blood must have run cold a number of times over what he undoubtedly considered dangerous ad-libbing on the part of His Holiness.

My second audience was in a smallish, private room in the Vatican. There were actually a whole series of rooms strung out one after the other of different sizes and depending upon the size of the room there was a different size group. I was able to notice this because I had to go through the entire series of rooms in order to get to the leading one, the small one, with not more than ten or a dozen people. But as I went through the others I was able to see the size of the groups. The Pope's interpreter is a Monsignor Ryan, six-feet-four, 250 pounds, no fat, and a wonderful brogue. He was the one who did the interpreting into English in St. Peter's. Monsignor Ryan warns you in advance that you are not supposed to ask questions but simply to follow along with the conversation that will be initiated by the Pope, who has been briefed in advance as to who you are, why you are there and what your main interests are.

As you stand around against the wall in the room, all of a sudden another monsignor comes in and following him appears the Pope. He is a small, slightly round-shouldered, rather heavy man, with a very benevolent face and the biggest ears I have ever seen. He goes up, shakes hands, says a few words, listens in a friendly way and then moves on to the next person.

When he came to me, he started talking in Italian. At a pause, Monsignor Ryan, who was next to him, broke in to tell the Pope that I spoke French, at which the Pope, in the most natural way in the world, said "Bene" and started off in French, very good French, but as I said before, with an Italian accent.

He talked briefly about the importance of journalism in the modern world, with all the forces for good and evil that are at work; he mentioned "Pro Deo" as an organization that he was all for and he then moved on to the next person in the most natural and friendly way imaginable.

Of course, what is at stake is something far deeper and far more important and in a sense far more dangerous than just the difference between the personalities of two different Popes, John XXIII as I have described him, warm, human, friendly, relaxed, preferring to be with people and his predecessor Pius XII, intellectual, aloof, austere, aristocratic, aesthetic and vastly preferring things of the mind to things of human content and contact.

As a non-Catholic, may I utter a vast over-simplification when I say that what is at stake is a decision by the present Pope and his close Vatican advisors that the traditional Catholic Church approach to human misery, unhappiness, poverty, of resignation on earth to whatever fate has decreed in order to achieve salvation through faith is no longer enough.

As far as the Church is concerned, the old approach will no longer suffice as a way of preserving the spiritual, mental and moral allegiance of Catholics all over the world. Stated a different way, it means that today's priest, today's monsignor, today's bishop and archbishop, today's cardinal, today's pope must not only have his doctorate in theology but also in the social sciences in order to be a dynamic part of the lives of Catholics all over the world who are suddenly emerging from agriculture into a neo-industrialization and urbanization and all that that implies.

Latin America is an example. The new African nations are another. The Vatican appreciates that the traditional approach is no longer good enough. Thanks to communications and the rise of industrialization, these people will all be jumping several centuries in one decade. Their standards of living will

be improved, their political consciousness will go from zero to a fairly high point very, very quickly.

Their social consciousness is being worked upon by the Communists, and the Vatican understands that unless it is an active participant in the process of this social, economic, political and industrial awakening it will no longer be able to hold the souls of these people after they are awake.

The dangers inherent in this tremendous decision are quite obvious. It is impossible for the Catholic Church to participate sociologically, to participate in the development of the social sciences in these countries without at the same time becoming heavily involved politically. This is supposed to be what they are not supposed to be doing. But they are going to be doing it, and on the side of the angels.

The anti-Catholic, anti-clericalists in Italy, and there are many of them, say that the Church is doing this purely for reasons of self-preservation. The pro-Catholic enthusiasts say that the Church is doing this for reasons of idealism. From my standpoint, I do not wish to enter into that argument, because I think it is beside the point. The big point is that in the titanic struggle between the free world and international aggressive Communism, what the Catholic Church has decided, and what it is in the process of doing and will do more of, represents a tremendous weapon on the side of Freedom. Whatever the motives, it is working for the free nations.

The big question is not whether the Church's motives are selfish or unselfish. The big problem is whether this new direction of the Church will be able to overcome political suspicions in the various countries in which it works in order to ally itself with the right kind of regimes. And also whether it will be able to ally itself with the new dynamic, young businessmen who appreciate that capitalism, so long as it was represented by twenty-five or fifty or one

hundred and fifty or five hundred families and everybody else starved, was not working. The question is whether the Church will be able to ally itself with these people as well as with the right political regimes in order to create what might be called a freedom front to counter the inevitably forming popular fronts behind which or in front of which are always to be seen the Communists.

Another significant aspect of this Vatican change is the forthcoming Ecumenical Council in Rome, scheduled for October. The word ecumenical and the ecumenical concept are nothing new to the Vatican. This has been going on for years. But the way it is going on today, the way it is being planned for October, is quite new and tremendously significant.

Until now, whenever the Vatican talked ecumenical, what they were really talking about was to bring the Greek and Russian Orthodox Church back into the fold. The thinking and planning for the coming Council goes way beyond this. Conceivably, it would be willing to go the full length of the road with Protestants and Jews. When I say the full length of the road, I do not mean that the Catholic Church proposes to abandon any of its basic doctrine. I simply mean that they are wholeheartedly prepared to explore with other faiths those areas and those techniques where they can work together, not only for the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God, but the freedom of people.

So between what is going on in the Vatican and what is going on in Italian business, pretty much all over the world but particularly in the Mediterranean, what is going on in Italy itself is the way of an economic renaissance and what is going on politically in Italy, I would say watch Italy.

London is of tremendous importance, so is Paris, so is Bonn, so are a number of other places. In fact, today we can no longer say that any capital, any country, any area is without importance and significance to the United States. All I'm trying to say is, we should not allow ourselves to be mesmerized by the

placenames with which we have become so familiar in terms of crises and problems to the exclusion of Italy, from which may emerge an element, a factor, a technique, a dynamic of tremendous value to all of us. Watch Italy.

None of this is going to be easy. Each one of the elements is subject to falling on its face. Each one contains tremendous built-in dangers. For instance, Nenni may prove to be a Communist Trojan horse in Italian politics. For instance, a U. S. slump might precipitate an Italian slump which might in turn create vast unemployment in Italy which would in turn give rise to even greater Communist opportunities in that country. For instance, the Vatican might take one step too many too fast. And the hue and cry for the separation of Church and State might assume such proportions that the Catholic efforts in the social area might be largely vitiated. For instance, the Italian Communists may find some slogan which will be an effective counter to what is going on. For instance, John XXIII, who is over 80, may die, and goodness knows what kind of man his successor might be. There are these and many other for instances.

However, on the other side, out of this ancient country may come quite unbeknownst to us, not unbeknownst but unnoticed by us, the thing, the element, the ally that we are all looking for. So I repeat, don't overlook Italy.