

Chronology 1970-2000

by Pietro Stampa*

We propose a commentary on the chronology of critical events in a cultural and political sense during the three decades 1970-2000, with special reference to the need to position the development of Italian psychology correctly in the history of the country.

The subdivision into decades is a mere convention and is done for ease of consultation.

1970-1980

The year 1970 opened amidst general anguish all over the country following the bomb attack of 12 December 1969 on the Banca dell'Agricoltura in Milan, the first of a series of attacks that were to dramatically mark the entire decade. Amongst the people taken into custody for questioning there was a militant anarchist, Giuseppe Pinelli, who on the night of 15 December in circumstances that were never clarified fell from a window of the Questura while being interrogated. Two years later police superintendent Luigi Calabresi, largely believed by the public to have been responsible for that suspicious death, was killed by a gunman never clearly identified, though immediately indicated as belonging to the left wing movement *Lotta Continua*, whose leaders of the time would be prosecuted and condemned only in 1997, based on the word of an informer, in a way that was widely criticised.

On 20 May 1970 Law n.300 was promulgated, commonly called the "Workers' Statute", which guarantees freedom of opinion and freedom to strike in public and private firms, establishes fair criteria for work placement and establishes the principle of a "just cause" as a condition for being fired.

In 1971 the degree course in Psychology was created at the Faculty of Education (a faculty designed for students from pedagogical schools after four years compared to the five years at Liceo, and therefore commonly regarded as being "second rate"). As Renzo Carli has rightly shown, the degree course was created without any professional/training project, and ignoring the potentialities offered by socio-technical systems, where psychologists were already employed on staff, such as some industrial groups or ENPI (National Body for Injury Protection) The culture of the degree course was in many respects inspired by Catholic ethical-pedagogical models (the Pedagogical tradition and the imprint given to it by the Head of the course, the Jesuit father Ernesto Valentini); and on the other hand inspired by the medical models of psychology (the Catholic University provided many teachers, who would presumably never have been given a position in that university). There was also, not to be ignored, the left wing catholic component that at the time was nicknamed "catto-communista" (one of the main exponents was the senator of the Independent Left prof. Adriano Ossicini).

This brings us to the cultural climate of the time.

Those were the years that saw the movement born in 1968 gradually being transformed into an opposing front that included at the one extreme, armed struggle, and at the opposite extreme the proposal of the PCI Secretary Enrico Berlinguer for a great "historic compromise" in response to the preparations for a military coup that threatened Italy's democratic order. Of these attempts, which luckily failed, in dubious circumstances, there were at least three between the mid-Sixties and 1973: it was no coincidence that Berlinguer launched his proposal in an article entitled *Reflections on the situation in Italy after the events in Chile*. Chile had suffered a bloody coup d'état after the election of a Socialist-led government. It must not be forgotten that in that period in western Europe there were three dictatorships: Spain and Portugal since the 1930s; Greece following a military coup in 1967.

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This threat, and its respect for the geo-political balance established at the end of the second world war by the Yalta agreements between the western power and the USSR, made the PCI extremely cautious in institutional activity, with the constant effort to find agreement with the catholic forces. The PCI was not entirely in favor of the battles conducted by the lay forces in parliament (liberals, socialists and radicals) to prevent the repeal via referendum of the law that had introduced divorce in Italy (1974): a battle later won thanks in part to its reluctant support.

In the same year, 1974, just over two months after the victory of the “No” vote at the referendum (12-13 May), the first of numerous terrorist bombs on trains exploded: the one that caused the Italicus bloodshed (4 August). In all cases the responsibility of the neo-fascists was ascertained along with the complicity of the so-called “deviated services”, sectors of the varied world of civil and military intelligence which in those years played an important role, which was hard to identify, in the “strategy of tension”, as it was called by the press. In parallel to the strengthening and spread of extreme left-wing armed struggle, the terrorism of the extreme right wing grew and spread: the former marked by choice of specific targets (judges and police commissioners, exponents of the political and economic establishment, journalists, neo-fascist militants, trade unionists both from the left and the right; while right-wing terrorism was marked by a preference for actions designed to strike undifferentiated targets not necessarily characterised in a political way, with the intention of creating in the country a climate of fear and a widespread “demand” for repressive law and order, a favourable terrain for a coup d’état or at least for an authoritarian turnaround in the democratic system.

In the second half of the decade there were however important victories for the left and for movements of public opinion in favor of implementing a modern welfare system. These include:

- Law n. 382 of 22 July 1975, setting up the Regional bodies as autonomous local administrations;
- Law n. 285 of 1st June 1977, containing important measures for youth employment, largely in the form of incentives for creating associations and cooperatives designed to receive funding to carry out social and cultural services, in the domain of local government bodies (Municipalities, Provinces, Regions);
- Law n. 180 of 13 May 1978, envisaging the gradual closure of psychiatric hospitals, and setting rules for voluntary and compulsory health treatments and checks;
- Law n. 194 of 22 May 1978, introducing the possibility of voluntary abortion (this time too a referendum to repeal the law would be called inspired by the catholic Church in 1981, but a very large margin expressed themselves in favour of the law);
- Law n. 833 of 23 December 1978, setting up the National Health Service.

At the end of the decade the idea of a military coup — which, you must remember, is not only of the extreme right: there are documented cases of involvement also of the social democratic area — definitely gave way to that of the reform of Italian democracy in an authoritarian direction via the internal takeover of the institutions by the members of the P2 Masonic lodge (also dubbed by the press “deviated”), organised and directed by the so-called “Grand Master” Licio Gelli, an ex-officer of the *Repubblica Sociale Italiana*, linked to the Italian secret services, to exponents of the DC and MSI and to the dictatorial government in Argentina, the country where he was a sort of honorary ambassador.

A critical event of unprecedented importance was the kidnapping, imprisonment and murder of the President of the DC, Hon. Aldo Moro (March-May 1978), captured by the Red Brigades in a bloody ambush while he was on his way to the Chamber of Deputies for the vote of confidence in the Andreotti government, the first destined to be appointed with the open support of the PCI. This affair, too, over the years, would see a number of overlapping interpretations involving sectors of the Italian and foreign secret services, *agents provocateurs* infiltrated into the Red Brigades, covert supporters and mediators of dubious motivation, never clarified. What is certain is that the Hon. Moro was the left’s main interlocutor on the prospect of an agreement of historic importance between forces that were by tradition diametrically opposed.

Meanwhile, in July 1976, following a serious electoral defeat, the central Committee of the PSI removed the aged Secretary Francesco De Martino replacing him with Bettino Craxi. This choice would entail a decisive cultural change in Italian politics, with an accentuation of the PSI’s “balance

of power” role, which would see it forming alliances with either the DC or the PCI, according to the situation, thus acquiring a power far greater than its mere weight of numbers.

Another fundamental element in the culture of the late 1970s was the birth of private television. Two sentences of the Constitutional Court, respectively of 1974 and 1976, had sanctioned the principle of freedom of television broadcasting, both via cable and free to air, provided it was in a local context. The first private broadcaster, Telemilano, later Telemilano 58, was bought by Silvio Berlusconi in 1978 and in 1980 became Canale 5, the head of a series of channels connected in a network.

In this decade the economy was marked by two-figure inflation, due to an unprecedented oil crisis and to the ending of the dollar's convertibility into gold (1974), which in effect unloaded American inflation onto the other currencies (international transactions all being in dollars). Inflation led to a credit squeeze that had dramatic repercussions on economic growth, especially in Italy where in a context marked by a close network of small and medium-sized businesses, the banking system was unwilling to take risks, unless it was with large groups.

This was to the detriment of consumer credit, practically non-existent, and housing market credit. In addition, there was Law n. 3 of 27 July 1978, for “fair rent”: a price control on rents which — like all price controls — simply had the effect of making the product disappear from the market, to the exclusive benefit of those renting from state bodies (housing being traditionally assigned through a system of patronage). Buying a house, when the banks were not giving loans, or giving them at interest rates above 15-20% only with real guarantees and very high deposits, was only possible for those with such guarantees and such a sum available because of their patrimony. In this situation, called “stagflation” (stagnation + inflation) by economists, which also involves a major drop in employment, young people's chance of leaving their family became increasingly difficult.

In those years the call for legislative recognition of the psychology profession was limited to an elite group of intellectuals paradoxically connected not to the domain of professional intervention, but to the university world.

As we have said, towards the end of the decade the SSN (National Health Service) was created as an expression of the welfare state which was not only sought by the socialist and communist left but also by the Catholics. In carrying out the administrative and organisational decentralisation of health care, the SSN also had to deal with the difficult heritage of the closure of the psychiatric hospitals and above all come up with a new design of global assistance for problems of “mental health”. Well before having a professional Order, psychologists were allowed to carry out complex professional functions in the SSN, though this was in a climate of methodological confusion largely due to the ideological aspect that at the time pervaded all disciplinary areas including the one where psychologists operated.

1980-1990

The decade opened in a climate of violence and widespread harsh social conflict with the deadly attacks regularly continuing by armed groups of the extreme left and right. In May 1980 FIAT made 78,000 employees temporarily redundant in one fell swoop; months of delicate trade union bargaining ensued, which on 10 December came to a dramatic breakdown. Fiat announced the start of the process of firing 15,000 employees, the workers responded by blocking the assembly lines. This triggered a very difficult confrontation which for 35 days filled the headlines and was to end in defeat for the unions: On 14 October 40,000 middle management cadres marched silently through the center of Turin at the end of a demonstration called to support the firm's decisions, and calling for the factories to go back to work.

On 27 June, in circumstances never clarified, in the sky over Ustica a DC9 carrying 81 people, staff and passengers, exploded. Deliberately planted false leads, suppression of evidence and the mysterious deaths of witnesses prevented the enquiring Magistrates to prove the responsibility of air force and naval forces involved in the area at the time of the explosion: it would be many years before the emergence of a well-grounded theory of a battle between Libyan planes escorting president Muammar Gheddafi against American and French planes and aircraft carriers during which the DC9 was presumably shot down by mistake by our allies.

On 2 August, at the station of Bologna, a bomb killed 85 people and injured 200: it was the most serious bomb attack in Italian history. Years later two neo-fascist terrorists would be sentenced, after admitting other crimes but always declaring themselves innocent of this one. The ex Minister of Internal Affairs and ex President of the Republic Francesco Cossiga would argue that on that occasion there was an accidental explosion of a load of explosives passing through the station of Bologna and destined for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

On 13 May 1981 Ali Agca made an attempt on the life of pope John Paul II; in this case, too, amidst disinformation and false leads, blame would be placed on the secret services of Eastern Europe, a Turkish nationalist organisation, and later on the “Magliana gang”, responsible it seems today for the kidnapping of a young citizen of the Vatican, Emanuela Orlandi. All this would then be linked to a serious financial scandal involving IOR (Institute for Religious Works) — the Vatican bank —, the mafioso and Italian-American banker Michele Sindona, some Italian and foreign private banks and the P2 Masonic lodge. The head of the IOR, mgr. Marcinkus, escaped arrest thanks to the Vatican’s refusal to extradite him to Italy; the two most heavily involved bankers, Sindona and Roberto Calvi, died seemingly by suicide but probably murdered, in circumstances never clarified; and they were not the only ones.

Shortly before he died of a heart attack while speaking at a rally, the secretary of the PCI Enrico Berlinguer launched the “moral question”. He wrote on 28 July 1981 in the daily paper *La Repubblica*:

The moral question does not finish with the fact that, as there are thieves, bribe-takers, and extortionists at high levels of politics and the administration, they have to be denounced and they have to be put in jail. The moral question in Italy today, is the same thing as the occupation of the state by the governing parties and their factions, it is the same thing as gang warfare, it is the same thing as the way these people conceive of politics and the methods they use to govern, which simply have to be abandoned and put behind us. That is why I say that the moral question is the crux of the Italian question. That is why the other parties can try to be serious forces for renewal only if they fully address the moral question by going to its political causes.

In actual fact, in the 1980-1990 decade the party system would achieve, with the series of center-left governments, an increasingly marked influence on all sectors of the country’s life, destructuring the country’s public systems and penetrating every part of them, while the public debt would reach extremely high levels (from 64% of GDP in 1982 to 105,2 % ten years later).

Meanwhile, however, the numbers of female pupils between 13 and 18 for the first time reach those of males.

Again, for the first time since the war, with the military intervention in Lebanon (1982), Italy sent an armed contingent as part of an international peace mission.

In the European elections of June 1984, for the first time the PCI became the leading Italian party, overtaking — though by a very slim margin — the DC. It would lose this lead in just three years, dropping from 33,3 to 26,6 %, and in November 1989, following the “fall” of the Berlin Wall, the Secretary of the PCI Achille Occhetto announced its dissolution, and the creation of a new formation that would take up its political but not its ideological heritage. In the meantime in the regions of Veneto and Lombardy there emerged the local Leagues, which then joined the Northern League: it was the first time that representatives of a secessionist group — historically the demand of Sicily, Sardinia and Alto Adige — had entered parliament, quickly taking up a position of power. It was the League that within a couple of years would undermine the excessive power of the Socialists in the heart of industrialised Italy.

A phenomenon that began at the beginning of the decade was that of large scale immigration of citizens from countries in the ex-socialist bloc, moving towards a rapid process of western style democratisation: the first groups came from Poland, thanks above all to aid organisations that had found unprecedented space following the election of Karol Wojtyła to the papal see.

In the early Eighties the personal computer also entered the scene and would radically revolutionise lifestyles with exponential speed.

These were the years when commercial television, of which Berlusconi rapidly acquired the monopoly, shaped the thinking of the Italians, with a force of penetration and pervasiveness vainly pointed out by a few critical intellectuals (on this, the writer and director Pier Paolo Pasolini, murdered in circumstances never completely clarified in 1975, had been prophetic). The P2 project

continued despite its revelation to the public: the creation of private television oligopoly and the fact that the state-owned pseudo-competitor would be subordinated to it, was a crucial point in Licio Gelli's "Plan for a rebirth of democracy".

It was in these years and in this political and cultural climate that there was the breakthrough of the regulation of the psychology profession.

During the first half of the decade, also because of the increased number of graduates, the SIPs became the "workshop" forming the cultural and technical support for Adriano Ossicini's parliamentary initiative; the trade union of the category AUPI, though less numerous than the SIPs, was just as influential insofar as it gathered under a single "umbrella" almost all the psychologists working in the SSN. A few sporadic alternative groups would have no power apart from some direct investitures by the socialists in some official contexts, but without the power to play an influential role.

The SIPs was marked by an extreme non-homogeneity and contained several different spirits: it did not exclude an attitude resistant to the prospect of regulation of the profession, in the name of an institutionally anomic vision, centered on the idea that the psychologist's main activity was psychotherapy and that this must remain "free and creative" in models and in practices. The rigid and sectarian Psychoanalytical Society found itself — rather in spite of itself — the leading spokesperson for this attitude: a "reactionary" position (in the technical and literal sense of the term) which it would maintain to the very end (though, it must be said, in very bad company ...). The SPI moreover followed — though with some exceptions — the American principle of the admission to training solely of candidates with a degree in medicine. It was not until 1987 that by a decision of the Antitrust authorities the psychoanalytical institutions were forced to admit psychologists, too, to training: this was a groundbreaking change which from the USA quickly spread all over the world.

In this ideological stance, one concrete interest certainly had great weight: the rumours circulating about admission to the professional Register were not at all reassuring for private psychotherapists and their trainers and the idea of their accepting the principle of judicial liability in professional practice was not helped by the age-old juxtaposition (strictly observed in the SIPs) between "academics" and "professionals". When in 1989 the professional Law was finally obtained, there were great divisions among psychologists, if not even bitter conflict between interest groups. At exactly the same time as this historic change in Italian psychology, the SIPs in particular found itself torn by dramatic contrasts both of a political-cultural kind and related to material interests.

1990-2000

In the last decade of the century immigration became so significant that it called for the first specific legislative intervention: Law n.39 of 28 February 1990, known as the "Martelli Law" after the then Minister of Justice, was oriented towards considering immigration above all as a problem of public law and order, by establishing criteria of entry, stay, expulsion and right of refugee status. In addition to immigration from East Europe and from Albania there was now that of the Maghreb and central Africa as well as from some Asian countries like Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. By the end of the decade there were about 300,000 legal immigrants, while the number of illegal immigrants estimated by various Institutions (Ministry of Internal Affairs, Community of St. Egidio, Caritas, Amnesty International and others) was very variable but considerably above that figure.

The mobile phone made its first appearance, at first regarded with widespread skepticism: but as we can see from the way the press talked about it, to most people having a system of mobile communication seemed to be a fashion that would be confined to an elite (what's more the phones and the service were initially and for some time very costly).

In 1991 the CERN (European Centre for Nuclear Research) in Geneva announced the creation of the World Wide Web: users all over the world would go from a few thousand to hundreds of millions by the end of the decade. In Italy in 2000 there were about 8 million.

Italy increased its military presence in international missions, which until 1999 largely involved the use of *Carabinieri* and volunteers chosen from the elite corps, but still doing compulsory military service. It was only in 1999 that in our country as in most of Europe, the Armed Forces became entirely professional and open to women.

Law n. 223 of 6 August 1990, which took the name of its first signatory, Oscar Mammi (PRI), established the television duopoly of RAI/Fininvest, which in the 1980s had taken root thanks to a gap in the legislation.

In June 1991 a referendum to repeal the multiple preference system in National elections was won by the sponsors (led by the ex Christian Democrat Mario Segni) with 95,6 % of the vote. Prime Minister Craxi had invited the population to desert the polling booths: in hindsight, this was the first strong signal of the imminent end of the so-called “first Republic”.

The arrest in February 1992 of a second level Socialist exponent from Milan, Mario Chiesa, marked the beginning of the “Clean Hands” operation conducted by the Public Prosecutor of Milan, which in a chain reaction saw the collapse in just two years of the entire political system that had dominated in Italy for almost half a century. The main question was the illegal funding of the parties through the plundering of publicly owned property, corruption by private individuals to gain unmerited advantages and party leaders getting rich in the process. Accused personally, Craxi defended himself as follows in parliament vindicating the mode of functioning of the *partitocrazia* (as it had already been dubbed by the Radicals) which had become the “controller” of the Italian state:

The parties [...] have resorted to or resort to the use of additional funding in an irregular or illegal way. If most of this matter is to be considered purely criminal, then most of the system must be a criminal system [...]

This defence would not save the traditional government parties from ruin, and only a few of their younger, less prominent leaders who were less clearly compromised would manage in the following years to stay afloat and play a significant role in Italian politics. Craxi, sentenced on many counts, managed in 1994 to leave the country — not “in exile”, as a recent campaign of rehabilitation would have us believe, but on the run — and would die in Tunisia in January 2000.

In November 1993 there came the announcement of Silvio Berlusconi’s “entering the field” (P2 membership card n. 1816, code E.19.78, group 17, file 0625, date of joining 26 January 1978), and on 26 January of the following year he proclaimed the birth of *Forza Italia* in a recorded televised message, of which the ideological-propagandistic nucleus is worth remembering:

I know what I don’t want and, along with the many Italians who in all these years have given me their support, I also know what I want. And I have the reasonable hope of being able to achieve it, in a sincere and loyal alliance with all the liberal and democratic forces that feel the civil duty to offer the country a credible alternative to a government of the left and of the communists [...]

Listen to them speaking, watch their news programmes paid for by the state, read their newspapers. They no longer believe in anything. They would like to transform the country into a public square of shouting, cursing and condemnation [...]

That is why we are forced to oppose them. Because we believe in the individual, in the family, in business, in competition, in development, in efficiency, in the free market and in solidarity, the product of justice and liberty [...]

In the National elections held on 27-28 March 1994, Forza Italia emerged as the first party with 21%, followed by the PDS (the Democratic Left Party, set up on the ashes of the dissolved PCI) with 20.3%. For the first time the majority system with one MP per electoral area was used: the citizens in every electoral area are called on to choose the candidate proposed by a coalition, in a head-to-head race of direct selection. It is useful to remember that in order to win the elections, Forza Italia stood with a “variable” coalition: in the northern areas it was allied with the Northern League, creating the co-called Freedom Pole, while in the south it stood with Alleanza Nazionale (the party set up by Fini after the dissolving of the Movimento Sociale) with the label of the Good Government Pole.

The public debt in the meanwhile reached 124% of the GDP.

In this climate of confusion and manipulation that pervaded every sector of life in the country, the 1990-2000 decade presented psychologists with the cultural and juridical problem of the application of the professional law in the phase of establishing the Order, with the consequent competition to occupy its strategic controlling positions. It was hoped that this competition would be directed to carrying out a project studied and pursued for almost twenty years by psychologists and

that in this realisation they would see the embodiment of the ideal principles that seemed to behind the institutional vindication: a professional order at the service of the professionals and of the citizens, efficient, transparent and capable of accepting and reconciling the requirements of both the providers and the users of a high quality service. It did not work like that, and it would soon be seen that competition— in the style which had now spread all over Italy thanks to the models offered by politics for decades — takes on the characteristics of a race for power in which all competence meanwhile is accepted insofar as it plays a decidedly ancillary role.

The formation of the first Registers as per art. 32 of the professional law, a task given to acting Commissioners appointed by the Presidents of the Courts of the regional capitals (plus the autonomous provinces) without economic resources or even basic organisation, took place according to the most varied criteria in the 22 seats responsible. The subsequent integration of the Registers as per art. 33 was carried out at the Ministry of Justice by a central commission which gave the text such a broad interpretation that in practice it gave access to anyone who could prove they had in some way worked as a psychologist for at least two years after graduating.

The election of the Councils, which took place between 1992 and 1994, saw a great success for the lists mainly composed of SSN psychologists supported by the trade union AUPI, while in the meantime the SIPs had dissolved following an initiative taken by the President Enzo Spaltro, who fervently wanted them to change in a federal direction: except in Lazio, no regional Branch was able to become autonomous and in order to form the lists the members had to contact other groupings.

Even more controversial was the way in which the newly elected local Councils of the Order proceeded to apply art.35, with the identification of those eligible by moratorium to practise psychotherapy as per art.35. In this case too every Council followed its own criteria, in part because the creation of the various Orders at different times did not allow a fully representative national Council to be created in time to organically coordinate the process.

The same must be said about the creation of the deontological rulebook, a disorganised catalogue of generic prescriptions, prohibitions that are not always legally viable, commonsensical statements and recommendations which did not reach the quorum at the referendum called to confirm it and was voted in at a second meeting by a minority of those entitled to vote.

The application of article 3, proved to be even more controversial— if possible — in the 1990s and the 2000s. This article is related to the recognition of the institutes qualified to train specialists in psychotherapy: on this issue the theoretical working and intervention group attached to SPS and to the *Rivista di Psicologia Clinica* over the years has produced numerous critical analyses, which we refer you to for further details.