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## Introduction

This report, as part of the case study reports within WP 6, provides in-depth insight into Italian cases of corruption in which journalists played a crucial role either because they discovered the case or because they were directly involved in the network of corruption.

### *Italian media landscape*

There are a variety of motivating reasons as to why a specific media outlet may choose to cover or refrain from covering a corruption story. In particular, to explain reasons of media involvement in a corruption story, it is always helpful to provide meaningful contextual background information on the media landscape.

The Italian media system is characterized by the predominance of television in attracting both resources and audiences. In contrast, the print press is the media sector in which most journalists are employed and in which national political news receives the most extensive coverage (Cornia, 2014). However, one of the main features of the Italian mass media system is a **high level of political parallelism**: the media outlets have a significant relationship to the political system (Hallin, Mancini 2004). In the Italian press, the tradition of commentary-oriented or advocacy journalism persists more strongly than in other European countries. The main target of newspapers, therefore, is not a mass audience but rather a well-educated readership (Sorrentino, 2003).

In television, departing from the traditional dual public–private pattern (Ciaglia, 2013), the role of politics is relevant for both types of networks. In fact, Silvio Berlusconi, former premier and leader of a centre-right coalition, is owner of the most important Italian commercial broadcaster (Mediaset). In the public broadcaster (Rai), the expression *lottizzazione* has been commonly used to describe the sharing of power among political parties within Rai. In both networks, general channels still dominate; for this reason, their target audience is not confined to a particular set of people, but instead, they aim to offer a wide range of programmes to a diverse general public.

Another long-established feature of the Italian press is **the absence of** what Italian scholars call a “**pure publisher**” (Mancini, 2002; Seghetti, 2010). Most newspapers are owned by businesspeople involved in other economic activities; their core business is not publishing but, for example, the construction industry, the financial sector, or private healthcare. These newspaper owners wish to

play a role in Italian political life and influence the policy-making process in favour of their non-journalistic business interests. Thus, in Italy, another very relevant feature is the **instrumentalization** of the media in which the media outlet is, in some sense, an instrument controlled by actors who are not primarily involved in publishing activities for the purpose of attacking competitors or defending their own interests.

Finally, **weak consensus** on journalistic standards and limited development of professional self-regulation reflect the scenario just outlined here. The journalists mix facts with their own opinions and they openly show a politically oriented bias. One well-known Italian journalist, Pansa (1977), used the phrase “**giornalista dimezzato**” (the journalist cut in half), which means that the Italian journalist belongs only half to himself and half to a power outside of journalism, particularly the media owners and politicians. Hence, it is not surprising that several surveys in Italy have stressed how, in journalism, pressure from senior editors or management is quite important, as there are limitations to one’s autonomy (Pellegatta, Splendore 2014).

#### *Media and corruption coverage in Italy*

Corruption stories, particularly those that occur in the public sector and regard politicians, are well covered by Italian media outlets. The stories of politicians, not only national political leaders but also local politicians (mayors, local ministers, etc.), involved in corruption scandals are published on the front pages of newspapers, are the first news of newscasts and are the main subjects of prime time political talk shows. The tendency of national quality (broadsheet) papers, newscasts, and internet news portals is to report corruption in connection to “grand corruption” scandals, while “petty corruption” in the news media is almost completely absent. Through this depiction, in a country characterized by unfair access to and the ineffective distribution of public services (ERCAS, 2015), Italian media outlets contribute to the diffusion of a low level of trust towards public institutions. Nevertheless, as was clearly displayed by the results of our research on media and corruption through the ANTICORRP Project, Italian news stories are derived primarily from “judicial activities”, while the role of “investigative journalism” is much less important. This means that judicial activity is often what triggers news of corruption and related topics. The noticeable presence of judicial activities is due to the length of the judicial process. In fact, in Italy, the final ruling arrives after several years; hence, a new step in the long judicial proceedings often returns the story to the front pages with new information.

Moreover, the Italian HACA and CACA reports have shown three other relevant findings. First is the “domestic nature” of Italian corruption coverage. Very rarely does the Italian news media report information about international corruption scandals. This is a very relevant feature of Italian

journalism: the journalists prefer to address scandals taking place almost exclusively within their national borders. In other countries, for example, in the UK and France, corruption coverage is also connected to international scandals or scandals involving neighbouring countries.

Second, corruption coverage is used by the mass media, particularly by quality papers, in an instrumental way. For media outlets, especially those with a clear political affiliation, corruption scandals become occasions to attack competitors or to defend favoured politicians and thus enhance the polarization of the national political debate.

Third, the coverage of corruption cases is used by media outlets to strengthen the fragmentation of a mass audience. Media outlets, when dealing with this topic, show very clear differences in their news selection strategy, as they must address the expectations of their own audience. For example, *la Repubblica*'s audience is mostly composed of public officials; for this reason, it covers scandals occurring in these sectors more than other papers. By contrast, *Il Corriere della Sera* gives the most coverage to corruption scandals that take place in Milan or other cities of the Lombardia Region because its headquarters is located in Milan.

#### *Selection of Italian case studies*

In choosing the Italian case studies, we followed several criteria:

1. **Relevance:** how important and how typical is the case for the daily practice of journalism in Italy and for the mechanisms at work?
2. **High profile:** are the individuals involved decision-makers, opinion leaders, relevant figures of particular sectors or influential in the media profession?
3. **Variety:** five case studies show a variety of possible interaction between media/journalists and corruption.
4. **Complexity:** the journalists and the media outlets involved appeared in various roles, both positive and negative.

We selected five cases, as follows:

<b>Case study</b>	<b>Rationale for choosing this case for analysis</b>
<p><b>Case study 1</b> Calciopoli. The Most Important Scandal in the World of Italian Football</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The case presents many facets of the phenomenon of corruption in journalism;</li> <li>• The case represents an ideal mix of different features that characterize Italian journalism;</li> <li>• Calciopoli is a complex case (all selected typologies are present);</li> <li>• The case shows how the coverage of a corruption scandal in Italy can be affected by media ownership.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Case study 2</b> The Bisignani Case</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Bisignani case” can be considered a rather unique and very different case;</li> <li>• the case shows that the structure and the procedures of journalism in Italy make possible the creation and emergence of a figure able to influence the policy-making process.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Case study 3</b> The Villa in Monte Carlo</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A case of instrumental use of investigative journalism;</li> <li>• the case demonstrates how the existence of an “impure publisher” in Italy may also have consequences for the coverage of corruption;</li> <li>• The case allows emphasis on another aspect of the Italian press, namely, its partisanship.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Case study 4</b> Infotainment and Current Affairs Television Programmes: From Petty Corruption to Grand Corruption</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The presence of “investigative journalism” in particular television programmes;</li> <li>• The observed programmes show how media market segmentation affects the corruption coverage;</li> <li>• The presence of “petty corruption” in infotainment programmes.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Case study 5</b> “Agente Betulla”: a case of secret agreement between a journalist and the Italian secret services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instrumental journalism</li> <li>• Secret agreement between a journalist and the Italian secret services</li> <li>• A case of “Actively corrupt” journalist</li> </ul>

# Calciopoli.

## The Most Important Scandal in the World of Italian Football

(Marco Mazzoni, Roberto Mincigrucci and Anna Stanziano)

### 1. Introduction

One of the biggest scandals in Italian football history was the case known as Calciopoli. This scandal, which this paper will investigate in detail, presents many facets of the phenomenon of corruption in journalism, which will be outlined according to the characteristics it takes on in Italy.

Calciopoli not only involved representatives of Italian football, such as players, referees and designators, and the top executives of some of the most important teams in the sport, but also a large number of journalists. Indeed, a number of journalists have been broadly implicated in the long judicial process that has attempted to bring order to a system that was hugely influenced by a dense network of relationships tied to economic interests, leaving little room for sportsmanship and professional loyalties. Some data demonstrate the centrality of the media, and journalists in particular, in the largest scandal in Italian football: more than 170,000 wiretappings were involved in Calciopoli: 150 journalists were tapped. Some were print journalists, others television journalists; some worked in public television, others in commercial television; some were sports journalists, others political reporters. In short, Calciopoli saw a significant part of the Italian news system involved in a major corruption scandal.

For these reasons, Calciopoli represents an ideal mix of different features that characterise Italian journalism stressing the various relationships that have been established between the central figures in the scandal in question and certain journalists. Indeed, the study of this case allows to identify professional figures embodying all four typologies that have been stressed. Calciopoli can, from this perspective, be described as a complex case. Indeed, we have identified the presence of journalists who behaved as an “*initiator*”, those who discovered the case, or were the first to comment on it; others who played the role of “*facilitator*”, extensively discussing the scandal in the news media, and conveying knowledge of the affair to the public; others have distinguished themselves because of their clear integration in networks of corruption, so that in this paper they have defined as “*actively corrupt*”; and finally there are those journalists who, through their own silence, played their part in the case by facilitating the corruptive behaviours, so that they have been defined as

“lazy”. Furthermore, what makes the investigation of Calciopoli even more interesting, in our view, is the ability to identify a further configuration of the relationship between the journalist and the corruption case, a new category that is possible to name the “*victim of the system*”. The case in question concerns a journalist who, appears to have been penalized in her work by the circuit of relationships that have arisen within corruption case, as she was not part of the network that controlled the “football system”. All these aspects, ultimately, clearly emerge in this report dedicated to the reconstruction of the case, which is primarily focused on the person who was able to build a system capable of conditioning the Serie A championship in Italy, Luciano Moggi, General Manager of Juventus FC, the most important football club in Italy.

In the second part of the paper, which presents data on the coverage of the case, we will demonstrate how Calciopoli also deserves to be investigated for another reason: it shows how the coverage of a corruption scandal in Italy can be affected by media ownership. The story has been “instrumentalized” and, as we shall see in the following pages, this happened for one simple reason: the owners of the major Italian newspapers are also the owners of the football clubs involved in the Calciopoli scandal, and they have used their newspapers to play down the case in the attempt to influence public opinion. Originally, there was a prevailing climate of outrage about the rigged football championships; following this, however, the newspapers managed to calm the mood, as their coverage was intended to safeguard the interests of their publishers.

## **2. The main sources of the study**

To carry out our analysis, we decided to use a range of sources capable of providing us with a wide-ranging and in-depth understanding of the Calciopoli affair. In addition to the analysis of the coverage, which will be discussed in detail later in this report, the contribution of two sources in particular proved useful: a book on Calciopoli, and the consultation of judicial documents relating to the legal proceedings.

The book in question is *Calciopoli. Collasso e restaurazione di un sistema corrotto (lit. Calciopoli. Collapse And Restoration Of A Corrupt System)*<sup>1</sup>, published in 2007 by Marco Mensurati, a journalist of *La Repubblica*, and Bruno Bartolozzi, currently head of the Bologna office of *Corriere dello Sport-Stadio*, and formerly a journalist for 15 years of *La Gazzetta dello Sport*. The book outlines the facts and the background of the Calciopoli system, by analysing the different networks involved: these aspects include the football teams, the designation of referees, and the media networks, focusing on the type of involvement the various newspapers and their journalists had in

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<sup>1</sup> Mensurati M. & Bartolozzi B. (2007), *Calciopoli. Collapse And Restoration Of A Corrupt System*, Milan, Baldini Castoldi Dalai.

the affair. The contribution of this book to our study was important as it allows to verify the accuracy of our information and interpretations, and produce an in depth analysis based on the expert perspective of the authors. It was decided to further investigate the issues touched upon in the book by conducting an interview with a well-known journalist about Calciopoli, as he was personally involved in reporting the events on behalf of a major Italian newspaper. Some excerpts of this anonymous interview have been transcribed in this report.

The other important source is composed of the court documents from the trial that are available for consultation online, as they were posted on one of the largest and most important blogs<sup>2</sup> written by fans of Juventus Football Club, the team most associated with the Calciopoli scandal.

### **3. The history of Calciopoli**

News of the Calciopoli case officially broke on May 3, 2006, following the publication of wiretaps in the possession of the Prosecutor of Turin; from this moment on Italian public opinion became aware of the complex framework of plots and relationships which had long characterized and determined developments in Serie A. In reality, Calciopoli, the name used by the media to describe the scandal from the second half of May 2006, was characterized by a marked temporal discrepancy, which separated the onset and emergence of corruptive phenomena in football and the discovery and discussion of the behaviour in the national media. The relationships and interactions within the network of corruption had remained well hidden for many years, allowing the phenomenon to develop and spread through the various professional groups involved in the world of football (footballers referees, officials, journalists, etc.).

It is worth clarifying the key stages in the investigation, and the publication of the first articles on the Calciopoli scandal in the press. Many experts believe that the true beginning of the story is locked away in an investigation file, which was opened by the Prosecutor of Milan in 2003<sup>3</sup>. This investigation was filed just a few months after it was opened, due to a lack of evidence. This file was impossible to be consulted<sup>4</sup>, even if it most probably contained important information about the first reported complaints about a network of corruption in football, statements made at the offices of the Prosecutor of Milan by prominent members of the football world, among them Massimo Moratti, at the time President of F.C. Internazionale, the Milan based football club, one of the most

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ju29ro.com>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.dagospia.com/rubrica-4/business/1-vero-mistero-calciopoli-faldone-indagine-che-pm-36004.htm> (Last consulted 3/4/2016).

<sup>4</sup> This investigation is filed with with a “modello 45”, the form used to archive manifestly unfounded claims, and for that reason it is impossible consult it.

important teams in Serie A. This dossier, despite pressure from lawyers to gain access to its contents, remains shrouded in mystery as the “football grail”.

In 2005 the Prosecutor of Turin opened another investigation after coming into possession of some wiretappings showing the existence of a network capable of influencing the outcome of a number of Serie A matches. However, once again, shortly after the beginning of this new investigation, it was dismissed due to a lack of criminally relevant information. In reality, this investigation by the Prosecutor of Turin marked a turning point for media attention in the affair (as up to that point no media source had made explicit reference to the accusations). Indeed, this time, some wiretaps were leaked from the Prosecutor of Turin’s investigation, and arrived in the editorial offices of a number of newspapers.

Indeed, the very first mention of Calciopoli was published on April 22, 2006, but in three lines at the end of an article by Roger Palombo, in his regular column *Palazzo di Vetro* (*lit. The Glass House*) in *Gazzetta dello Sport*, which stated: “*Notice to navigators: a shower of wiretaps is about to arrive, next time use pizzini* (*lit. slips of paper popular with Mafiosi*)”<sup>5</sup>. The *Gazzetta dello Sport* was clearly in possession of the wiretaps, which would change the history of football. This paper had a real scoop on its hands; yet it decided to publish only three lines, as a cryptic comment. The *Gazzetta dello Sport* was therefore the first newspaper to touch upon the scandal that would devastate the world of Italian football - an *initiator* according to our typology – but at the beginning gave the story very limited visibility.

As we will see in next pages, the decision of *Gazzetta dello Sport* to give, at least initially, low visibility to this scoop was likely connected to its ownership. Here one of the main feature of the Italian press comes out that explains well on how the newspapers tackle a corruption cases. Most of Italian newspapers are owned by business groups that use these media outlets to play a role in Italian political life and to influence the public opinion in favour of their not-journalistic business interests. In this setting, the corruption coverage is used by quality papers in an instrumental way, namely corruption scandals become occasions to attack competitors or to defend own interests. Regarding Calciopoli, this latter possibility occurs: indeed, as we explain in more detail later, the ownership of *Gazzetta dello Sport* overlapped with the ownership of some football teams involved in the scandal: because of this the most important sports newspaper tried to cover up the scandal until it was possible. Our anonymous source explains in this way the specific choice of the *Gazzetta dello Sport*:

*It’s crazy, this colleague is a talented journalist, he has always written this column called The Glass House, he is practically “the man” at la Gazzetta dello Sport, and he is at the crossroads of all the most diffuse political and economic interests. Well, you can imagine what it means to*

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<sup>5</sup> “Palazzo di Vetro” (*lit. Glass The House*) in “*La Gazzetta dello Sport*” 22 April 2006.

*deal with these topics for the Gazzetta dello Sport. You have enormous power, and Palombo, instead of taking a shot, with the certainty that there were these wiretaps - and he had them - he only writes a few lines. Perhaps he had an idea about what they would entail... I would have put a huge headline on the front page, just out of an interest in informing the people. Palumbo wrote this, but if you have all the information to hand in a news story, then you present that news properly, and if you do not have enough information, then you wait.*

*So which navigators do you warn? And here there are two possibilities: either you bring an atomic bomb to the office, and your editor notices it, but then the publisher is so steeped in an anti-journalistic logic that he calls the editor and says "we have this stuff that will cause trouble for everyone," and tells you to censor it, and then everything is squeezed down to three lines on page 28. But this seems like an absolutely incredible dynamic to me. Or it may be that what happened is that all his friends were involved in the intercepted calls, and perhaps he was also involved in the wiretaps, or afraid that he might be, so instead of breaking the news with a fanfare, he sends a message steeped in vanity, which makes no sense... I think the truth is complex, it's six of one and half a dozen of the other. We are also aware that there are two factors that feed off each other, the inclination of the owners, and the willingness of journalists to toe the company line.*

The general public first became aware of the breaking scandal through the media outcry on May 3, 2006. The wiretaps in the possession of the *Gazzetta dello Sport* had also arrived in the newsroom of two other national newspapers, *la Repubblica* and *La Stampa*. As the news had by now leaked, it could no longer be stemmed, and so on May 3 2006 all three newspapers launched the story in banner headlines that shook the Italian media system: two of the main headlines were "*Il diritto di sapere*" (*lit. The right to know*)<sup>6</sup> and "*Telefonate sugli arbitri, il calcio trema*" (*lit. Calls about referees, football trembles*)<sup>7</sup>.

The Serie A seasons that were accused of having been rigged, as referenced in the wiretaps, were 2004-2005 and 2005-2006. The folders of the Prosecutor of Turin also ended up in the hands of the FIGC, the Italian Football Federation<sup>8</sup>, as the FIGC wanted to determine whether the case involved behaviour that was punishable by sanctions under sports regulations.

This is a characteristic that, in judicial terms, distinguishes Calciopoli from any other case investigated by criminal justice alone. The threads of two different types of justice are intertwined in this case, the traditional legal system and its sport equivalent. There are points of contact between them, but their procedures and subsequent sanctions take different paths, making the matter even more difficult to disentangle. Ultimately, the legal procedures are divided into two strands, that of sports justice (from May to October 2006, the time frame we have concentrated on) and the judicial system, in which the criminal investigations started in the autumn of 2008 at the court of justice of Naples, and continue up to the present day.

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<sup>6</sup> *La Gazzetta dello Sport* 3 May 2006.

<sup>7</sup> *la Repubblica* 3 May 2006.

<sup>8</sup> *la Federazione Italiana del Gioco del Calcio (lit. Italian Federation of the Game of Football).*

Within a few days of the media explosion surrounding the case came the resignations of many in the world of Italian football, including Franco Carraro, president of the FIGC, and two of the main executives at Juventus, the football team which would be most heavily punished, Antonio Giraudo, then Managing Director, and General Manager Luciano Moggi, the central figure in the Calciopoli scandal.

#### **4. The role of the journalists in the corruption system**

Luciano Moggi was the “great puppet master” of the Calciopoli scandal; his dense network of relationships wound from the world of football clubs, through that of referees and their designators, and as far as the world of journalism, where Moggi had close links and numerous contacts with some of the top professionals in the world of television journalism and the print media. Because of the connections Moggi was able to influence many matches results. He was able to favour the advancement of the team where he was general manager, Juventus, making contact with the designators of referees in order to assure the assignment of officials that would facilitate his team’s victory. In exchange “Lucianone” (lit. “*Big Luciano*”), the nickname attributed to him by the press, offered favours, gifts and jobs for relatives and friends of his “accomplices”, richly rewarding those who proved faithful, as evidenced by the wiretap, reported below, of a conversation with his son Alessandro, who was president at the time of Gea World S.p.A<sup>9</sup>, which dealt with football agents until 2006.

Luciano Moggi: “*Alessandro, listen carefully... I am going to send you a guy who lives in Rome, he’s an acquaintance of De Cesari at the FIGC. Look after him and show him the ropes, because he would like to get into football as an agent. I’ll send him to you next week*”<sup>10</sup>.

Alessandro Moggi’s Gea World company (later hit by the trial which sealed its closure in 2006), was not only a privileged bargaining chip used to repay favours, but also a fundamental point of entry into the world of the football players transfer market. However, in order to completely manage events, as only a master puppeteer knows how, it was necessary not only to address the designation of the referee for each game, but to organise everything surrounding the game. If the referee blows for a penalty for no reason, or cancels a goal that should not have been disallowed, it is easy for an informed observer to notice that something might be wrong, that perhaps behind an inexplicable penalty there is the invisible hand of someone who is trying to manipulate the football

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<sup>9</sup> A sports consultancy company based in Rome, Dubai and London.

<sup>10</sup> Wiretaps reported by [www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/sport/articoli/articolo310245.shtml?frommobile](http://www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/sport/articoli/articolo310245.shtml?frommobile) (Last consulted: 3/4/2016).

system. That is why action was needed in order to “suppress” the discussion, to avoid controversy, or put a positive spin on events. Moggi recognized that it was necessary to find a gateway to the world of journalism, as well as the world of refereeing: it was as important to “control” certain journalists as it was to “control” the designation of referees. Not surprisingly, in the year and a half when Moggi’s phone was tapped it was discovered that there were about 150 journalists who approached him with a certain regularity.

Moggi succeeded also in addressing one of the most important television programs in the world of Italian football, “*Il processo di Biscardi*”, a late night panel show. The show discussed the details of all the Serie A matches, with emphasis on tactics, refereeing decisions, and the legitimacy or otherwise of penalties, free kicks and goals, through the use of a tool which became an integral part of the program, the use of slow motion replays. The recordings made by the Prosecutor of Turin show that Moggi was attentive to every detail of the television program, which he was able to manage with great skill, thanks to the complicity of the presenter, the journalist Aldo Biscardi, the studio guests, and even the man who presented the action replays, Fabio Baldas (a former referee), as evidenced by the following phone call.

Baldas: “*Luciano they tore me to pieces!*”

Moggi “*They tore you to pieces?*”

Baldas: “*I tried to defend myself but they attacked me from all sides and said I was a Juventus fan*”

Moggi “*I’ll ramp up the number of people close to me there at “Processo di Biscardi”... we’ll strengthen our moorings, you can be sure of that*”<sup>11</sup>.

From following tapping it became clear that Moggi was the true “director” of the “*Processo di Biscardi*”, choosing the topics to be discussed, and even suggesting footage of incidents that were unfavourable to his team during matches, in order to have his version of the truth broadcast on the air, side-tracking any insinuations. Moggi was also very careful to control and manoeuvre the opinion of the commentators, especially journalists, who played along with his game with great willingness. One tapping involved a phone call between Luciano Moggi and Franco Melli, a sports journalist and regular commentator on *Processo di Biscardi*.

Moggi: “*We’ll hammer them tonight!*”

Melli: “*We’ll leave them black and blue, don’t you worry*”

Moggi: “*And we’ll sort out that guy there that will attack Farina’s refereeing... If they start talking about Del Piero I’m going to say that Del Piero is a very important player for Juventus*”.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Wiretaps reported by: [www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/sport/articoli/articolo310245.shtml?frommobile](http://www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/sport/articoli/articolo310245.shtml?frommobile) (Last consulted: 3/4/2016).

He addressed the “director” of the show in a similar manner during the broadcast, to protest against a journalist who was defending a rival team:

Moggi: *“When you take a break, have a word with the guy who is defending the Roma fans, just talk about the assault on the bus, tell him what I told you... at the very least cut him off, damn it”*<sup>13</sup>.

The programme “*Il processo di Biscardi*” and most of the journalists who appeared on the show can therefore be clearly defined as *actively corrupt* within the proposed typology: this programme was a strong point of the system built by Moggi.

It was in this way that, in Calciopoli, the network of the news media system meets the network of corruption, thanks to journalists that offered themselves to the corruptor, and did not defend their professional autonomy, preferring the certainty of the secure and powerful support of Luciano Moggi to the search for, and publication of, the truth. Some even performed this task by reciting a script written ad hoc for them, while others simply kept their mouths shut, in order to avoiding speaking about anything that might inconvenience the “puppet master” (Moggi).

Ciro Venerato, a sports correspondent for the same broadcaster, was Luciano Moggi’s “favourite”. Many telephone calls tapped prove close relationship of complicity and trust, such as the call in which Venerato called Moggi to congratulate him on a Juventus victory, and to inform him that he would be a guest on the next episode of a RAI sports program.

Venerato: *“I’ve never enjoyed a victory so much, we really stuck it to that bastard (with reference to Zdenek Zeman, the Lecce manager, a long term enemy of Juventus)... I wanted to let you know that Domenica Sportiva (lit. The Sporting Sunday) will have a live feed from Lecce with our enemy Zeman”*

Moggi: *“Let’s see what they let him say, and then we’ll decide what to do... make sure we have overlapping voices...”*

These phone calls are a demonstration of how Moggi missed nothing, thanks to his faithful journalists, who could also provide useful news. *Ciro Venerato*, however, was able to go a step further. As it has emerged from some tappings, Venerato would pass on to Moggi the movements of a colleague that the General Manager of Juventus FC really did not like at all, *Francesca Sanipoli*, another RAI journalist that our research has revealed to be a victim of the system of corruption that infected the world of journalism in the Calciopoli affair.

Venerato referred to Sanipoli in the following intercepted phone call with Moggi:

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<sup>12</sup>Wiretaps reported by: [www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/sport/articoli/articolo310245.shtml?frommobile](http://www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/sport/articoli/articolo310245.shtml?frommobile) (Last consulted: 3/4/2016).

<sup>13</sup>Wiretaps reported by: [www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/sport/articoli/articolo310245.shtml?frommobile](http://www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/sport/articoli/articolo310245.shtml?frommobile) (Last consulted: 3/4/2016).

Venerato: *“It’s* **Ciro**, sorry to bother you Luciano. Thanks for the lift yesterday and everything else. I wanted to tell you two things: the first is good news, I won’t send you Sanipoli anymore, I think, for the next seven years, I’ve talked to Ignazio (Scardina, chief editor of RAI Sport) and I explained a few things”.

Moggi: *“You can send her all you want, I wouldn’t have her eaten alive”*.<sup>14</sup>

This and other conversations confirm on the one hand the clear position of **Ciro Venerato** inside the **Moggi’s** network, and on the other **Sanipoli** in the role of “victim” in the affair, necessitating the inclusion of another category in our typology of reference, that of *victim of the system*, that is, a journalist who refuses to be part of the “corruptive system” and suffers clear professional consequences as a result.

**Sanipoli** repeatedly denounced her “disadvantaged” position in sports broadcasting. Not surprisingly, in the hearings of 30 October 2009, she made the following statement at the Court in Naples:

*“Correspondent is a big word, since Mr. Scardina became head of football for RAI (from 2000 until 2006, the period regarding the released tappings), well, they have allowed me to understand the reason for everything that was happening to me, and why I was doing very little work as a correspondent. And on top of that I have suffered various forms of professional downgrading, even bullying, to the extent that in March 2005 the union of RAI journalists, represented by Roberto Natale, USIGRAI secretary, took my case to the joint commission. After that Roberto Natale made me understand that as long as a certain gentleman was chief of staff, who protected certain circles of people, I could not resolve anything with RAI, and therefore he advised me to sue. So in early 2005 I went to see a labour lawyer and started a lawsuit for professional de-skilling, without knowing what was behind it. Only when the interceptions came out in all the papers, and I was a party in the proceedings, with access to other interceptions, only then did I realize what was behind it”*.

Indeed, **Sanipoli** had long been kept away from any broadcasts that **Luciano Moggi** did not want her involved in. The **Moggi** system established that only those sports journalists close to him were offered work, to the extent that the rule was: “if **Moggi** doesn’t like you, you won’t get work”. This is also confirmed by the words of our interviewee:

*The Moggi cupola, many called it Moggiopoli, which in addition to sounding terrible is just wrong, it’s Calciopoli... they felt like they were able to do anything, without any form of control... Italian society is particularly predisposed to these forms of compromise, so the cupola is not a cause, it is an inevitable effect of the society we live in, the same way there will be others that will do the same thing... their goal is always the same: control of the life of society and information, through journalists, who are simply too close to them.*

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<sup>14</sup> Wiretaps reported by: <http://www.tgcom24.mediaset.it/sport/articoli/articolo310245.shtml> (Last consulted: 3/4/2016).

In any case, Moggi was certainly not the only cause of the sickness in Italian football, as other figures in the management side of Serie A were also implicated in the complex web of Calciopoli, each trying to defend their own interests and those of their team. The main figures of the sport trial were, in addition to Moggi, Diego Della Valle, Chairman of A.C. Fiorentina, Claudio Lotito, president of S.S. Lazio, and Adriano Galliani and Leonardo Meani, executives at A.C. Milan. All these figures, together with others, were often on the phone with Moggi.

The final verdict in the sport justice trial was a blow to the clubs involved and their managers, the referees and the organizational structure of the FIGC. Among the clubs most affected was Moggi's Juventus, with the revocation of the title of Serie A champions in 2004-2005 and 2005-2006, and automatic relegation to Serie B. The executives were suspended from management roles, among them the aforementioned Claudio Lotito (four months), Adriano Galliani (five months), Diego Della Valle (eight months), Leonardo Meani (two years and two months) and Antonio Giraudo (five years); Luciano Moggi was also given a five-year suspension. The referees involved were suspended in proportion to their involvement in the case.

By contrast, the ordinary justice system, with the criminal trial that started at the Naples Prosecution Service in 2008, has focused on the penal implications related to sports offenses. With the judgments on appeal<sup>15</sup> Moggi was sentenced to two years and four months in prison, and Pairetto to two years, both for criminal conspiracy to commit sports fraud. As for Lotito, Della Valle, Meani and other senior management figures, the statute of limitations had expired, and they could no longer be subjected to any sanctions. However, on 23 March 2015 the Court of Cassation overturned the convictions of Moggi, Giraudo and Pairetto that had been established at appeal, as the statute of limitations had expired on the alleged offenses. The day after the judgment, several national newspapers carried Luciano Moggi's shout of victory: "*I won!*"

As has already been pointed out, the football network was not the only one involved in the Calciopoli affair. The world of journalism too was implicated, in terms of illegal activity and its complicity in the corruptive system. The Order of Journalists<sup>16</sup> began the process of investigating the actions of a number of members that compromised their activities by failing to comply with the code of ethics. Those involved included many journalists of the television programme "*Il processo di Biscardi*": all considered as *actively corrupt* according to our framework. The criminal law case against almost all the journalists (under which they had initially been implicated) was shelved in 2007, but many of them were still suspended from the Order of Journalists with the accusation of being puppets of the Moggi system. The only journalist investigated and prosecuted for criminal conspiracy was Ignazio Scardina, who was later acquitted at first instance by the Court of Naples.

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<sup>15</sup> Corresponding to the 2nd degree in the Italian judicial system.

<sup>16</sup> A public body founded in 1925, membership is mandatory in the journalism profession.

## 5. How the coverage of Calciopoli changed: the role of newspaper ownership

In this section data on the coverage of “Calciopoli” in the six months after the news broke in the media, from 3 May 2006 to 31 October of the same year, are described. We will examine how the major newspapers dealt with Calciopoli, in order to chart the differences in the type of coverage.

**Table 1: Analysed newspapers**

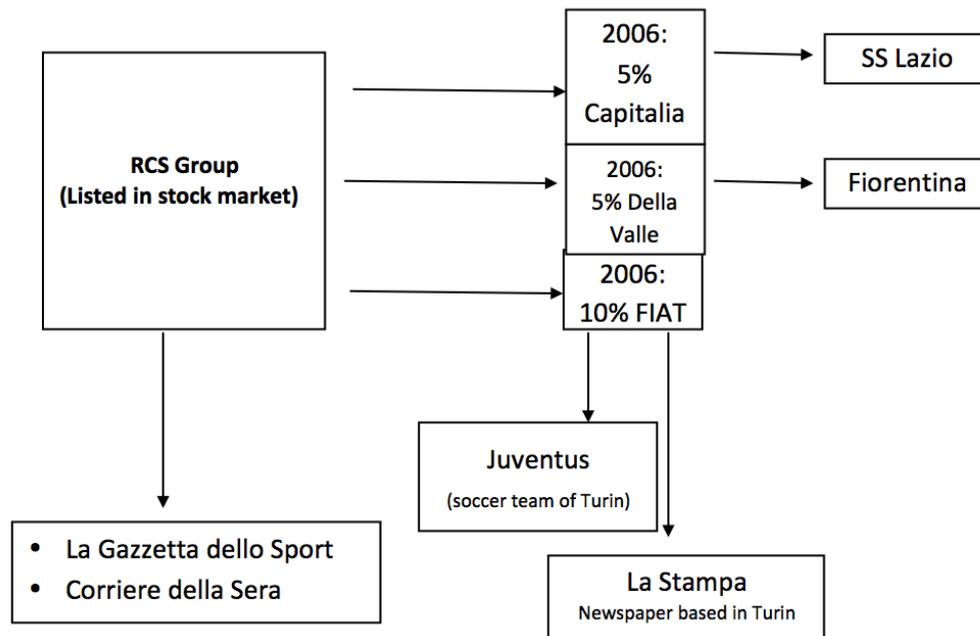
<b>Il Corriere della Sera</b>	First newspaper in Italy in terms of circulation, owned by the RCS Group.
<b>La Repubblica</b>	Second newspaper in Italy in terms of circulation, owned by L'Espresso.
<b>La Gazzetta dello Sport</b>	First sports newspaper in Italy in terms of circulation, owned by the RCS Group.
<b>La Stampa</b>	High circulation newspaper with headquarters in Turin, owned by FIAT, which also owns the Juventus Football Club S.p.a.

Table 1 shows the four newspapers selected for the analysis of the coverage of Calciopoli. The first two selected newspapers are *Il Corriere della Sera* and *la Repubblica*, the two most popular and widely read newspapers in Italy. The third newspaper, *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, is the sports newspaper with the highest circulation in Italy. The fourth newspaper is *La Stampa*, the fourth largest newspaper by circulation in Italy.

The ownership of the newspapers is another element that was considered in the choice of publications for this study. For this reason it was decided to investigate two newspapers belonging to the publishing group RCS (as can be seen in the following illustration), *La Gazzetta dello Sport* and *Corriere della Sera*, as some of the major shareholders of the RCS group were implicated in the Calciopoli scandal. This involvement, as we shall see in the following pages, influenced the coverage of Calciopoli in these two newspapers to some extent. In particular, the shareholder structure of the publishing group RCS in 2006, as stated by Bartolozzi and Mensurati (2007, p. 147), included:

- a) Fiat, owner of Juventus FC, which held 10% of the RCS group,
- b) Diego Della Valle, owner of Tod's and Hogan, two of the leading Italian fashion brands, and in particular the owner of Fiorentina Calcio, who held 5%,
- c) Cap Capitalia, one of the main Italian banks, owner of the Roman team, SS Lazio, which held 5%.

Finally, *la Stampa* is not just a Turin based newspaper, it is also a newspaper owned by Fiat, which also owns the football club most involved in the scandal, Juventus FC. In short, the case of Calciopoli is also of great interest because of the clear interplay between newspaper ownership and the ownership of the clubs involved in the scandal, which, as we will attempt to demonstrate from this point forward, had an (inevitable) effect on coverage of the story.



All the articles published on the case in question were collected from the online archives of the four newspapers<sup>17</sup>. The selection of articles was carried out with the use of two keywords, chosen after careful analysis of the articles on each website. More specifically, the key word “tappings” was chosen as it was through the tapping of a large number of phone calls that the scandal came to light, while the keyword “Calciopoli” was the term coined by the media to refer to the case.

<sup>17</sup> <http://archivistorico.corriere.it/#>  
<http://www.lastampa.it/archivio-storico/>  
<http://sitesearch.gazzetta.it/sitesearch/home.html?q=calciopoli>  
[http://ricerca.repubblica.it/?refresh\\_ce](http://ricerca.repubblica.it/?refresh_ce)

**Table 2: The first article published on the Calciopoli case in the four newspapers analyzed**

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Article Title</b>
<b>Il Corriere della Sera</b>	4 May 2006	<i>“Moggi intercettato: «Ma che arbitro ci avete mandato?»” (lit. Moggi intercepted: “What kind of referee have you sent us?”)</i>
<b>La Repubblica</b>	3 May 2006	<i>“Telefonate sugli arbitri, il calcio trema” (lit. Calls about referees, football trembles)</i>
<b>La Gazzetta dello Sport</b>	3 May 2006	<i>“Il diritto di sapere” (lit. The right to know)</i>
<b>La Stampa</b>	3 May 2006	<i>“Dossier scuote il calcio Intercettazioni telefoniche che riguarderebbero personaggi dei club e del mondo arbitrale” (lit. Dossier shakes football, wiretapping involves individuals at clubs and referees)</i>

Table 2 shows the title and date of the first article that each newspaper devoted to the Calciopoli case. The scandal exploded on May 3 2006 with stories in *la Repubblica*, *La Gazzetta dello Sport* and *La Stampa*. *Il Corriere della Sera* arrived somewhat late, publishing its first article on the case a day later, on 4 May 2006. Whereas Table 3 displays the number of articles published by each newspaper during the period under analysis (from May 2006 to October 2006).

**Table 3: Number of articles published by each newspaper (from May 2006 to October 2006)**

<b>Newspaper</b>	<b>Number of articles</b>
<b>Il Corriere della Sera</b>	347
<b>La Repubblica</b>	596
<b>La Gazzetta dello Sport</b>	648
<b>La Stampa</b>	402

The newspaper that stands out is *La Gazzetta dello Sport*, indeed a sport newspaper, with 648 articles. Such a high number of articles not only places *La Gazzetta dello Sport* in the “*initiator*” category, as one of the first publications to make the scandal public (not forgetting the concerns advanced by our interviewee about the behaviour of this newspaper in presenting the case for the first time), but it also demonstrates its activity as a “*facilitator*”, a typology we have created for those media outlets that dedicate thorough coverage to the case. *La Gazzetta dello Sport* gave the case a high profile, not only as a major national story of corruption in Italian football, but also because the outcome would compromise the performance of the teams involved, with a major impact on the result of the Serie A championship. There is also another element that must be

considered, and this is the “average reader” of *la Gazzetta dello Sport*. Not only is he/she far more interested in the sports trial than ordinary justice, but he/she is also keen to know, perhaps more than anything else, whether his/her favourite team is involved in the case, and if as a result they might be penalized. The main sports newspaper must therefore inform its readers about the risks involved for the individual teams caught up in the scandal, with updated information on the evolution of the case.

The second newspaper in terms of content is *la Repubblica* with 596 articles, another “*initiator*” and then “*facilitator*”, followed by *La Stampa* with 402 articles, a number far lower than the paper in first place. In last place is *Il Corriere della Sera* with 347 articles, 301 less than *La Gazzetta dello Sport*.

**Figure 1: Comparison of the trend in coverage in the four newspapers (from May 2006 to October 2006)**

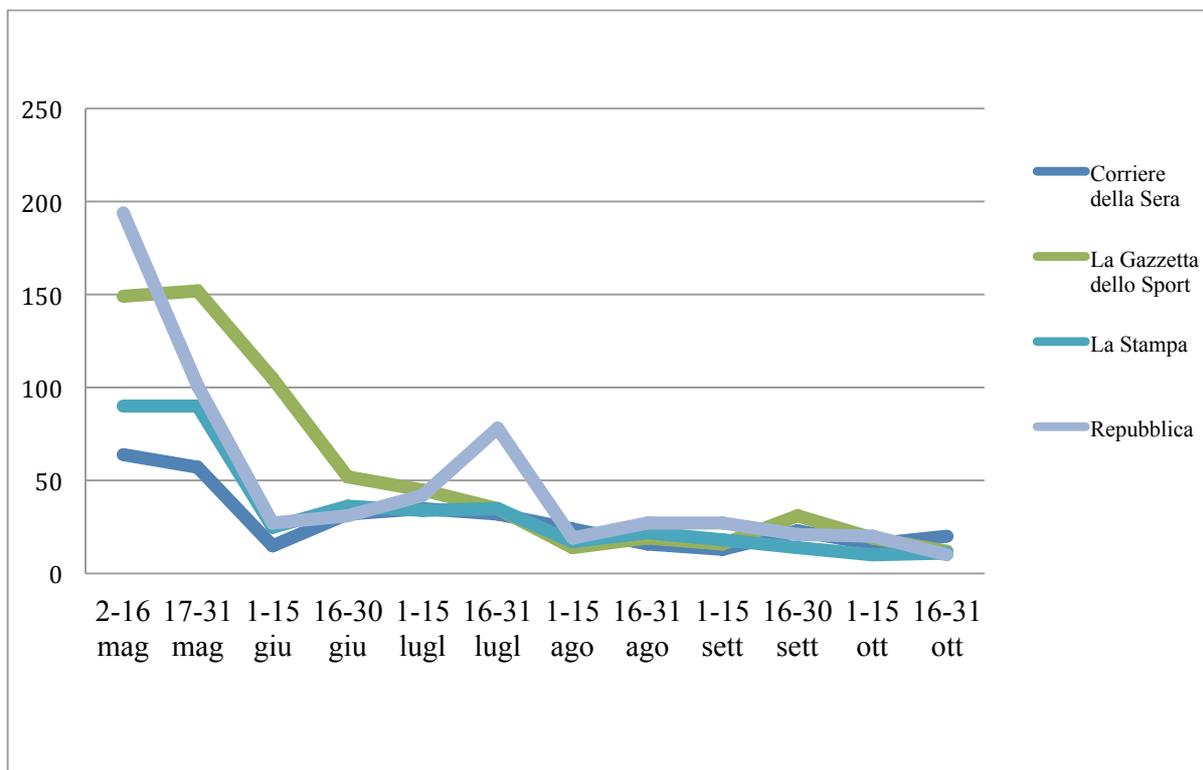


Figure 1 shows the trend over time, in terms of the number of articles published about Calciopoli. In the graph, we decided to split the six-month period May-October 2006 into smaller segments of 15 days each.

An initial result that emerges from Figure 1 is that the trend in the coverage of the four newspapers is quite similar and homogeneous, with some small (but relevant) differences. While *la Gazzetta dello Sport* is, as observed, the newspaper that published the most articles dedicated to Calciopoli during the six months study period; in the early days when the scandal first came to light *la Repubblica* was the newspaper that paid most attention to the case, perhaps because it was free to cover the first phase of the story more attentively and with a greater emphasis. One possible explanation could be that *la Repubblica*, among the four newspapers observed, is the only one whose owners have no vested interests in football, a point that we will return to later.

After the first phase, characterized by a genuine “media storm”, there follows a phase in which all four of the investigated newspapers publish less articles on the case. The impression is that in the first phase there is a desire to ride the wave of indignation, while in the second there is an attempt to “deflate” the Calciopoli case. The line representing the trend in the coverage of *la Gazzetta dello Sport* is almost always above the lines of the other newspapers. However, when the story reaches one of the most important moments, the first instance judgment in the sports trial (15 July 2006), it is once again *la Repubblica* (with a peak in the period 16 - 31 July) that dedicates most space to the verdict at the sports court, attempting, more so than the other three titles, to bring order to the story by focusing on the first judgements. The different attitudes displayed by the newspapers in key moments of the story leads to the assumption that their coverage was influenced by the degree of involvement of their publishers in the scandal. This is the also the opinion expressed by the anonymous journalist during our interview:

*Sport is a particular sector in society and the narration of society... there's a common belief that the people who buy a newspaper, when they come to the last ten pages, they don't want to read about problematic issues anymore, but prefer an emphasis on narrative, something emotional, and they do not want to think that people also steal in sports. This determines the fact that if a journalist is aware of a betting scandal, then they try to compress it down to half a page, and if you can avoid writing anything at all, that's even better. Do you know how many times I have brought in a real news story? But what they prefer is the grand gesture, the great champion. That has been evident many times, and certainly in Calciopoli, in particular at the beginning. There was a certain embarrassment at some newspapers about telling the whole story.*

In short, what has been stated by the journalist, and argued thus far in this paper, allows us to highlight another of the most important aims of our investigation: namely to show how the action of the media in Italy, and therefore the journalists involved, in the face of corruption scandals is influenced by their ownership (especially when the owners are involved in the scandal). It is no coincidence that all this can be found in Calciopoli. Indeed, Calciopoli was not only selected for

this study because many journalists played an important part in the Moggi system, as we have extensively described in the preceding sections.

The case in question makes it possible to highlight the “instrumentalisation” of the newspapers. It should be remembered that one of the peculiarities of the press system in Italy is the “*impure publisher*”, namely that the newspapers belong to economic groups that derive their main income from sectors other than publishing. For this reason, the newspapers tend to represent the position of their publishers, with the aim of influencing public opinion. The newspapers, furthermore, are used by their owners to defend themselves if they are involved in scandals, while particular attention may be paid to another scandal in order to attack a political or economic opponent.

The instrumentalization of the press also influences the coverage of scandals involving the world of corruption, as illustrated by the HACA and CACA reports with regard to Italy. This also occurs when the scandal affects, as in the case highlighted here, the sport most loved by Italians, football. In short, during Calciopoli, the Italian media was caught between the need to respond to readers’ interests, in their role as fans (individuals who love to read content that feeds their passions and hopes), and to satisfy the wishes of the major shareholders of the publishing groups, which in turn, as described, have a direct interest in football.

In the light of what has been said, we will try to analyze and interpret the coverage of the four selected newspapers from a different perspective. If the analysis of Figure 1 was simply descriptive, there are now more elements to discuss. Firstly, it can be argued that the “furious media campaign” of May 2006 was due to the fact that when news of the Calciopoli scandal broke, it would have been impossible to make editorial choices bent “to cumbersome shareholder demands, it would have been too unpopular. You must guide the indignation to remain credible after the events” (Bartolozzi, Mensurati 2007, p. 148). This citation from Bartolozzi and Mensurati should be read with particular attention to the final words, “to remain credible after the events”, as they appear to be confirmation that the coverage of the story had to follow a specific plan: to safeguard the future interests of the publishers and owners of the teams involved after the scandal.

When an investigation begins, everyone is on the case, without a thought for the interests of the individual newspaper owners, as the competitive environment takes precedence over any other demands. It is important to attract the widest possible readership, and the newspapers respect their duty to inform their readers about the issues. Not by chance, in the beginning Calciopoli was reported in depth, even though some newspapers, according to our interviewee, should not only have presented the news as it emerged, but also offered an interpretation, thus putting pressure on the political sphere to intervene.

The headlines from May 2006 support this, as the papers rode the initial wave of popular indignation. In addition to the headlines presented in Table 2, we should also mention: *La Gazzetta dello Sport* of May 14 with “*Uno scudetto al veleno*” (lit. *A poisoned championship*), *la Repubblica* of May 23 with “*Tra arbitri venduti e tifosi barbari*” (lit. *Between bribed referees and barbarian fans*), and *Corriere della Sera* on 20 May with “*Cene con Moggi e biglietti, l'imbarazzo dei PM di Torino*” (lit. *Dinners with Moggi and tickets, the embarrassment of the Prosecutor of Turin*). Nevertheless, it is possible to trace a precise pattern behind the press coverage and the “furious media campaign” in May, as evidenced by editorials by Giuseppe D’Avanzo and Marco Travaglio, journalists at *la Repubblica* at the time. Indeed, the lawyers who were defending the involved football teams were able to benefit from the huge amount of news published in May deriving from phone tapings that they used to gather more details to better organize and prepare their arguments for the Calciopoli trials.

In the early stages, however, the coverage was conditioned by the desire for justice among readers, and public opinion in general, and the clamour for a structural reform of the football system. Football was experiencing its own version of Tangentopoli, the bribery scandal that had hit Italian politics in the early 1990s, as confirmed by a headline in *Corriere della Sera*, “*Tangentopoli e Calciopoli. A credere alle favole è rimasto il Bar Sport*” (lit. *Tangentopoli and Calciopoli. The last place where people believe in fairy tales is at the sports bar*). The football system was diseased and rotten, and the elimination of the individual who had done the most to build the system that conditioned the football championship, Luciano Moggi, was in itself no longer sufficient. What was needed was something more dramatic: a root and branch “clean up” of football. This would, however, have had an effect on the interests of any businesses that had invested heavily in the world of football.

Therefore, at the moment when, on the back of the discontent of millions of football fans, the interests of the powers in the game were genuinely affected, the coverage of the story underwent a change, coming into what we have identified as a second phase. This is the phase in which the wave of indignation decreases, in the face of a change of course dictated by the media themselves, that at a certain point began to target those who wanted to change and reform football. This happened for one simple reason: the economic actors, also referred to as the great powers in charge of the football clubs involved in the scandal, used their newspapers and television stations to play down the importance of the affair. In other words, in this second phase, the media were no longer used as a sounding board to attack and denounce the Calciopoli scandal, but rather as a weapon in the hands of publishers, in order to influence public opinion, and change the prevailing climate in the country about the Calciopoli affair.

As stated by Bartolozzi and Mensurati (2007), the time to go on the attack, in this second phase, arrived in the middle of the summer, when the most acute phase of the crisis had passed, as confirmed in Figure 1, which shows that from July 2006 all four newspapers, except for the peak of *la Repubblica* in the second half of July, began to devote less attention to the affair. There is evidence of a turnabout at almost all the big newspapers. The favourable editorials about changes and reforms disappear, while articles calling for exemplary justice for the teams involved evaporate altogether. Above all, the newspapers start suggesting that “perhaps the culprits are not entirely guilty; perhaps it is not necessary to relegate them all to Serie B; perhaps the economic damage is disproportionate, and the fans would be punished twice, because after witnessing rigged championships for years, now they would now find themselves without their favourite team” (Bartolozzi and Mensurati 2007, p. 148).

In short, the climate was being changed by the news media. Extensive debates were to be avoided, and questions were no longer asked about how and why football had come to be on trial. The media even began to question the extraordinary gravity of the scandal. In this second phase, the media in general, and the press in particular, turned their interest towards a focus on sporting punishments, such as points deductions and new rankings. Nothing else seemed to count for anything. It is clear that in such a context, manufactured and planned by the media, such changes were very much to the advantage of the strong powers, which, as Bartolozzi and Mensurati put it, manoeuvred from inside their “forts of information.” National newspapers, both sports papers and the mainstream press, all participated in this great battle, with the aim of downsizing Calciopoli, and in this way protecting the position of one powerful group or another with interests in football.

Before concluding, however, it is worth remembering the role of two newspapers which, while taking diametrically opposing positions, maintained the same editorial line from the beginning: *la Repubblica* and *La Stampa*. As already noted, *la Repubblica* was one of the first newspapers to talk about the affair (*initiator*) and published the highest number of articles in the early days of the scandal, and the only newspaper whose owners, as already mentioned, had no vested interest in football, and was therefore not involved in the Calciopoli scandal. Perhaps this is why it attempted to reconstruct the story with particular attention to detail, including identifying the people involved, and presenting the salient moments and the first sentences handed down by the sports court in depth. Above all, what differentiates *la Repubblica* from the other newspapers is that it demonstrated how “poteri forti” (strong powers) had made their way into football, and the effect this had on the game, in particular in editorials by its leading journalists. *La Repubblica* therefore, even when the climate was changing at the end of the first phase, always drew the attention of its readers to the need to change the football system. One example is the article “*Il commissario isolato nella palude del*

*pallone*” (lit. *The Commissioner isolated in the football swamp*), in which Giuseppe D’Avanzo claims that considering Luciano Moggi to be the only “architect of a city that became corrupt due to a mishap” (the author’s ironic tone is clear throughout the piece) would be a serious mistake, while it would be just as grave to think that once “Moggi had been accompanied outside the walls, the city of football could soon return to being as cheerful, successful and rich as ever”. The fear expressed by D’Avanzo and his newspaper, which at a certain point remained almost the only publication interested in continuing the fight against corruption in football, is that Calciopoli would simply conclude with the penalization and expulsion of Moggi alone, without the implementation of much needed reform in football, which was not called for by those with a vested interest in the game.

The other newspaper that should be mentioned is *La Stampa*. *La Stampa* not only shares its birthplace and home, Turin, with Juventus, but also shared ownership. Both are the property of the Agnelli family. So how did the daily newspaper closest to the football team most involved in the scandal behave?

It is interesting to see how a newspaper can untangle itself from such an extensive network of opposing needs, and as result, how it treated the scandal in question. In the case of *La Stampa* there is neither an initial phase nor a second phase in the type of coverage given to the scandal; indeed, it emerges that the coverage of *La Stampa* is distinguished from the outset by a defensive approach to the “protagonists from Turin” (Moggi and Juventus FC) on the one hand, attempting to minimize their role in the affair («*Cupola? Non esageriamo*» «*Moggi fa da capro espiatorio*» (lit. “*Cupola? Don’t exaggerate*” “*Moggi is a scapegoat*”)), while on the other hand turning the spotlight on the perceived enemies of Juventus FC to put the pressure on them (“*Perché Moratti rischia*” (lit. *Why the Inter owner Moratti is in danger*)<sup>18</sup>). *La Stampa* is another example of media instrumentalization: the main protagonists of the story, close to the owners, are defended, while their enemies and competitors are attacked, such as Massimo Moratti, who was seen as the main rival of Juventus FC due to his accusations.

## 6. Conclusions

What emerges from our analysis of the Calciopoli scandal is that success in the Italian football league, at least until 2006, not only involved victory on the football pitch, but was also achieved through a wider competition for the conquest of public opinion, by means of a dense network of relationships capable of influencing it. Within such a network it was fundamental to be able to count on a large number of journalists, to ensure a positive spin during the post-match discussion,

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<sup>18</sup> Massimo Moratti was at the time President of Football Club Internazionale Milano SpA.

favourable coverage in newspapers and on television, and no mention of any damaging news, such as any unfair advantage resulting from a refereeing error. This network of relationships clearly emerges in the investigation of the role of journalists in the case of corruption in question. We identified several journalists, and some newspapers, that reported and dealt with the case in depth, in the role of *initiator* or *facilitator*, publicizing the corrupt behaviour of the main protagonists in the affair, and acting as a genuine stimulus for the work of the investigators. On the other hand, however, it was easy to highlight a number of journalists who turned out to be an active part of the power network involved in corruption case. These journalists, as demonstrated by the tappings, received guidelines from Luciano Moggi on how to do their jobs, and for this reason can be counted in the *actively corrupt* or *lazy* categories, according to our framework. The system was consolidated to the extent that those who refused to be part of it risked serious repercussions in their professional career. This was the case of Francesca Sanipoli, side-lined by the management at RAI because Luciano Moggi didn't like her: an *ad hoc* category was therefore created, *victim of the system*, to include such cases in which a corruptive system turns against a journalist who is intent on conducting their work according to the rules.

As well as highlighting the different roles that journalists can play in a case of corruption, the Calciopoli scandal also allows us to bring to light another highly important aspect of the coverage of corruption and related phenomena in Italy. Indeed, the Calciopoli case made it possible to analyze the encounter between the logic of the media and one of the most characteristic aspects of Italian journalism, namely the instrumentalization of the Italian press. What we defined as the "first phase" in this paper involved the uncovering of the criminal activity, the publication of the court papers and tappings, the involvement of top-level personalities from the sports world, and the subsequent popular mobilization against the accused, in order to bring about a radical change in the corrupt system. A scandal involving the world of football is a highly newsworthy event, especially in Italy, and market oriented media outlets that have to sell advertising space cannot refuse to cover such a major story, irrespective of the interests at stake. The media system in Italy, however, is characterized, as said, by impure publishers, who use the media less as a source of profit, and more as an instrument to influence the public debate. The case of "Calciopoli" is of greater interest than other scandals because the ownership of newspapers and the ownership of the teams involved in the scandal overlap. Therefore, after a period in which it was impossible not to mention the scandal, another phase begins, in which the vested interests used their newspapers to downscale the story. This second phase involves a process of the "normalization" of the scandal, in which the tone is less stringent, and the calls for exemplary sentences, which would risk penalizing the publishers of some of the newspapers in question, grow quiet, to be replaced by editorials that, rather than demand a

radical change, attempt to convince the reader that excessive recourse to the justice system would affect a wide range of teams and individuals, and in some way penalize everyone. It is no coincidence that the only publication that steadfastly supported the need for change until the end was *La Repubblica*, the only newspaper with a publisher with no direct interest in football.

# The Bisignani Case

(Marco Mazzoni)

## 1. Introduction

Few Italians are aware of Luigi Bisignani, despite the fact that he is one of the most influential person in the country. Ministers, members of parliament, journalists, public officials and entrepreneurs – in short much of the ruling class of the country – have stood in line outside his office to ask him for advice, to plan strategies and discuss business. Luigi Bisignani is recognized as the undisputed head of a network that has conditioned the life of the country to the extent that, as has been discussed in some books and (very few) newspaper articles that will be referenced in this report, there was no appointment he did not have a hand in, from the nominations of ministers to appointments at RAI (the Italian public broadcaster), newspapers, banks and the military. His influence even reached the Vatican.

This report begins with a detailed study of Bisignani's life, a thorough chronological reconstruction of the most important milestones that characterized his path, from both a professional and private point of view. In the case of Bisignani his professional career and private life are interwoven with a dense network of acquaintances and relationships that led to him being considered one of the most powerful men in Italy. It would be pointless to deny that he is perhaps best remembered for being investigated in the scandals involving the P2 and P4 Masonic lodges, as well as the mother of all bribery scandals, the Enimont affair<sup>19</sup> during the Tangentopoli period, when a pool of magistrates discovered a widespread network of kickbacks involving the main political parties that characterized the historic period from 1948 to 1994, which is known as “la Prima Repubblica” (the First Republic). Yet behind this side of Luigi Bisignani there is also a man with a past and, above all, an education, far from the world of corruption.

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<sup>19</sup> The Enimont trial was the main *Mani pulite* (lit. *clean hands*) court case held in Milan between 1993 and 2000, which saw the major politicians of the First Republic accused, along with some entrepreneurs (including many from the Ferruzzi group) of having paid and / or pocketed a “megabribe” (maxi-tangente) of about 150 billion lire: the money was used to illegally finance political parties.

Bisignani is first and foremost a journalist. Early in his career he worked with the main Italian wire agency, ANSA, before going on to collaborate with *Panorama*, a weekly current affairs and politics magazine published by Mondadori, and *L'Espresso*, the equivalent publication of the L'Espresso group. The two weeklies have different, one might say opposing, editorial standpoints, as *Panorama* follows the political line of the centre right, while *L'Espresso* supports positions adopted by the centre left. As we shall see in the following pages, the figure of Luigi Bisignani goes beyond this contrast between right and left, as a transversal figure to whom those in senior positions turn, regardless of their political affiliation.

During the 1970s and 1980s Bisignani was associated, thanks to his profession as a journalist, with First Republic politicians of considerable importance, holding a position of chief press officer and, later, as a confidant of a number of business groups such as Ferruzzi, at the time a giant of Italian food sector. While these may appear to be spheres with little in common, Bisignani was able to hold them together thanks to the numerous relationships he was able to cultivate. Indeed, he managed to create a network of transversal relationships that allowed him to exert a considerable power of influence, and was capable, as previously stated, of having an impact on political decisions that involved important positions in Italy.

This report aims to show that the structure and the procedures of journalism in Italy make the creation and the emergence of a figure like Bisignani possible. Indeed, Italian journalism, as will see in the next pages, almost never plays a role as an interface between civil society and the political system, but rather it is an instrument used by the political system to promote dialogue between the members of the leadership elite that rule the country. The marked political parallelism that has always characterized Italian journalism is proof of the fact that journalists, politicians, and top managers in Italy operate in close proximity to one another, to the extent that their roles sometimes become interchangeable (it is quite common for journalists to become politicians or vice versa). Consequently, the partisanship of the press in Italy has always been pronounced; newspapers tend to represent distinct political alignments, and this is matched by the political sympathies of their readers. Finally, another characteristic of the Italian media is what is named “impure publishing”, that is to say that behind the daily newspapers in particular there are individual entrepreneurs or business groups that derive their main income from sectors other than publishing. The result of the situation described here is that the public debate in Italy is influenced by a network of strong links that exist between journalism, politics and economics. Bisignani, as we will attempt to demonstrate through this report, is the product of a similar entanglement.

Bisignani's power was that of influence, as the well-known American political scientist Robert Dahl (1963)<sup>20</sup> would have said, understood as a relationship in which an actor, in this case Bisignani, induces other actors to behave in a manner they would not otherwise have behaved. In the light of the facts, the position of Bisignani is close to that of an authentic *éminence grise*, a "Grey Cardinal", a figure with maximum authority that, however, is not officially recognized, and, above all, exercises his power behind the scenes, without drawing attention to himself.

Ultimately, Bisignani is the model of the man who is well informed about other people's business, but speaks very little about himself. He has spent most of his life fluctuating between the printed word and the corridors of power, going on to become a figure capable of influencing any appointment. The ultimate goal of our research is therefore to verify how, and to what extent, Bisignani's career in journalism was able to help him to build relationships and important networks in different environments, also far from the world of journalism. Therefore, the power of Bisignani, being marred by scandals and inquiries relating to the world of corruption (Tangentopoli and the P2 and P4 Masonic lodges), is an effective case to study in order to define the role of journalists involved in cases of "active" corruption.

## 2. The main sources of the study

The main source used for the preparation of this report is not an academic text, but rather a book-length interview with the emblematic title, *L'uomo che sussurra ai potenti* (lit. *The Man Who Whispers To The Powerful*), in which Luigi Bisignani offers his answers to questions posed by Paolo Madron, journalist and editor of Lettera43, a leading online newspaper. This in-depth discussion of his long career not only allows us to understand the context in which Bisignani usually manoeuvred, but also to directly enter into the mechanisms that have guided Italian politics from the First Republic to the present day. It is also important to consider the publisher of the book in question, Chiarelettere. Chiarelettere is a publishing house that is known for two strongly interconnected reasons. Firstly, it is particularly attentive to investigations about power and those who exercise it, choosing to give a voice to those who have experienced power first hand, but they are little known to a wider audience. In fact, the reason for giving the floor to Luigi Bisignani can be read on page 2 of the book *L'uomo che sussurra ai potenti*, which features a note from the editor:

*We have rejected many proposals for books by the protagonists of the political scene. Chiarelettere does not want to act as a sounding board for those who already occupy the daily*

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<sup>20</sup> R. Dahl (1963), *Modern Political Analysis*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.; Prentice-Hall.

*print media and TV. Luigi Bisignani, however, while described by many as the most powerful man in Italy, does not write essays, does not appear on TV, and is not involved in the newspapers. This is why we gave him a voice. He does not comment, does not speak, and is not there. Yet he is everywhere (Madron, Bisignani, 2013, p. 2).*

Secondly, it should be remembered that the publishing house Chiarelettere is also a major shareholder of the newspaper *il Fatto quotidiano*. This newspaper was founded in 2009 with a commitment to provide independent news, without favouring or protecting any political party, with a focus on the news associated with scandals that other publications often pay little attention to, or even “cannot cover.” The intention is therefore to tell stories from a different perspective than that of the most established Italian newspapers. Not surprisingly, many see *il Fatto quotidiano* as an “opposition” broadsheet, regardless of who is in power (in this regard, it should be remembered that *il Fatto quotidiano* is the only Italian newspaper to have renounced public funding, surviving on revenues from advertising and sales alone). Therefore, the choice of dedicating a Chiarelettere publication to Bisignani conforms perfectly with the editorial line of *il Fatto quotidiano*: to make people aware of the history of such an important character in Italian politics, of which little was known before now, because of the limited number of times he has been discussed in the mainstream Italian media. Bisignani’s testimony, as stated, can be considered unique, in that it illustrates how power, true power, works in Italy, which in most cases does not need to speak, and operates in the shadows.

Another important source of this report was an interview conducted with Paolo Madron (30 October 2015). Madron, author of the interview in the above-mentioned book, is not only a journalist like Bisignani, but also a trusted friend. In short, we consider Madron a reputable source to draw upon for clear, precise, and above all reliable information on the “Bisignani case”. There is a friendship, as recounted by the interviewee, which was born in the early 1990s, when Bisignani was hired as the external relations director for the Ferruzzi Group, and Madron was the New York correspondent of *Milano Finanza*, one of the main economic and financial publications in Italy. For these reasons, Bisignani was an important source for Madron’s activities, as he himself tells us:

*As head of external relations for the Ferruzzi group, he evidently became a point of reference for many journalists. Ferruzzi was a strong economic group in the US, with an important representative office in New York. It was for these reasons that I first came into contact with Bisignani, and we’ve known each other for 25 years.*

Finally, we wanted to evaluate the extent of the news coverage that has been dedicated to a man such as Luigi Bisignani, through a study of some articles published in the major Italian newspapers.

### 3. The key events in the life of Luigi Bisignani<sup>21</sup>

Luigi Bisignani was born on October 18, 1953, son of Vincenzina Carpano and Renato Bisignani, head of Pirelli in South America, and a well-respected man in Masonic circles. Luigi spent much of his adolescence in Argentina. He returned to Italy at the age of 16 and moved to Rome, where he studied at the Faculty of Economics at Sapienza University, graduating with honours some years later. He was given his first assignment straight out of university, thanks to previous work for minor newspapers, becoming a reporter for the wire agency ANSA in 1973. At just 20 years old he was investigating news involving the police, the Vatican, freemasonry and the secret services. Journalism brought Bisignani into contact at an early age with the circles, in particular those of the Freemasons and the intelligence services, which would help him build a strong network of relationships.

In 1976, only three years after starting his career as a journalist, he met Gaetano Stamatì, then Finance Minister, and a leading figure in the Christian Democracy party. Bisignani became chief press officer for the party during the three governments of Giulio Andreotti (the preeminent figure in Christian Democracy during the First Republic), remaining in this position until August 1979. This period was a key moment in the life of Bisignani, as it brought him into contact with highly important politicians. First and foremost among these was the previously mentioned Andreotti, who would become a true teacher and guide. Bisignani, as the interviewee tells us, had a very intimate relationship with Giulio Andreotti, acting as a sort of factotum. Bisignani was always in Andreotti's office, from early in the morning, receiving visitors from the electoral college asking for favours, submitting dossiers and problems. In this way Bisignani was able to get to know and build relationships with dozens, if not hundreds, of prominent people in the political and economic sphere at the national and international levels. Madron recounts the details of the first meeting between Bisignani and Andreotti:

*Bisignani was slapped by Franco Evangelisti, Undersecretary of the Presidency of the Council of the Andreotti government, because he thought Bisignani had tipped off the newspapers Corriere della Sera and La Stampa about the timing of certain appointments. Bisignani, angered by what happened, wrote a letter to Andreotti, who received him in his study. Thus was born a relationship that served Bisignani very well, because Andreotti was Prime Minister, Foreign Minister... the good fortune to be close to someone like that is, if you're a bit shrewd, it allows you to build an agenda of important relationships.*

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<sup>21</sup> The reconstruction given here, as well as the biographical references in the discussion, is the result of an attentive study of the book-length interview *L'uomo che sussurra ai potenti* (lit. *The Man Who Whispers To The Powerful*), P. Madron, L. Bisignani, Chiarelettere (2013). To date this text remains the only official source of reference for biographical information about Luigi Bisignani.

At the same time Bisignani also came into contact with other prominent members of the Christian Democrats, such as Amintore Fanfani and Francesco Cossiga, one of the most important figures in the world of public television (RAI), Ettore Bernabei, and a young entrepreneur at the start of his career, Silvio Berlusconi.

Once the experience with Stamatii came to an end, Luigi Bisignani returned to the role of full-time journalist and, at the dawn of the 1980s, appeared to be perfectly placed to become one of the most important journalists in Italy. A little later, however, he was to be hit by a scandal involving the Propaganda 2 (P2) Masonic Lodge. In 1981 prosecutors discovered the existence of the Lodge, and the participation of the youngest *piduista* (lit. member of P2) in history, Luigi Bisignani. Despite these events, the ANSA wire agency decided not to fire him, and Bisignani always denied belonging to any Masonic lodge. In the late 1980s, when the shake-up involving the P2 Lodge had settled down, Luigi Bisignani also tried his hand at writing novels, publishing two highly successful spy stories: the first *Il Sigillo della porpora* (lit. *The Seal of the Purple*) (1988) and the second, *Nostra Signora del Kgb* (lit. *Our Lady of the KGB*) (1992). As a result of these best-selling thrillers he was dubbed the “Italian Ken Follet”.

In the same period, in 1988, Luigi Bisignani became Editor-in-chief of ANSA, which he would leave a year later, first to join the organizing committee of the Italia '90 FIFA World Cup, and then, in 1992, he became head of external relations for the Ferruzzi industrial group. This group owned *Il Messaggero*, the most important Roma newspaper, and Telemontecarlo, at the time one of the main commercial television channels. Bisignani was charged with the task of strengthening the presence of Ferruzzi in publishing and the broadcast media. The outbreak of the Enimont affair in 1993, part of the biggest Italian corruption scandal, Tangentopoli, which involved the main political parties of the time, was the second scandal in which Bisignani was a protagonist: he was arrested on January 19, 1993 on charges of violation of the law on the public financing of parties. He turned himself in to police a year later, on January 7, 1994. Bisignani had been the “postman” responsible for the transit of the millions in “megabribes” (*maxi-tangente*) that the Ferruzzi Group paid the parties using open current accounts at the Vatican bank, the IOR. Bisignani was convicted a year later, in 1998, and sentenced to three years and four months, later reduced by the Court of Cassation to 2 years and 8 months.

In 2000 the Order of Italian Journalists (*Ordine dei Giornalisti*) also intervened, as a result of Bisignani's conviction in the Enimont affair, and his involvement in the illegal financing of political parties, and expelled him from the order. This was perhaps the most devastating episode in his life: the world where he had started, that of journalism, had now turned its back on him.

2001, however, was a year that marked a true turning point in the career, of Bisignani. Silvio Berlusconi had won the general election, and was appointed Prime Minister for the second time, and Bisignani became his trusted adviser. But just when it seemed that everything was running smoothly for Bisignani, the P4 scandal broke in 2011, and the reputation of the former journalist was dragged through the mud again, this time to an unprecedented extent. On the orders of the Prosecutor's Office of Naples, thanks to investigations led by the prosecutor Henry Woodcock, a public figure in Italy due to the important investigations he was involved in, Bisignani was accused of criminal conspiracy, aiding and abetting and the disclosure of office secrets. In the same period he was also under investigation for money laundering, in relation to the funds involved in the Enimont bribery scandal. On June 15, 2011 Bisignani was subjected to house arrest on laundering charges. Five months later, in November of the same year, he agreed to a plea bargain for 1 year and 7 months. Bisignani's name also appeared in another judicial inquiry, known as Why Not, which aimed to confirm the existence of a Masonic lodge capable of affecting government decisions to award contracts. This was conducted by another well-known prosecutor, Luigi De Magistris, the current Mayor of Naples. In this case, however, Bisignani was able to successfully defend himself from the accusations.

At present Bisignani is president of a consulting firm, Four Consulting, and collaborates with the newspaper Il Tempo. He has never been keen to talk about himself, and even less so on being discussed by those who know very little about him. However, after the above-mentioned scandals, which have certainly reduced the power of Bisignani, something curious happened: he emerged from the shadows and became more visible, giving interviews and appearing on TV. Madron tried to explain why during our interview:

*I do not believe that Bisignani needed visibility, although I do think that Bisignani has enjoyed this sort of fame. But there is a reason for the visibility of Bisignani: at a certain point, as it also says in the preface of our book, he wanted his children to know that their father is not the delinquent everyone says he is. And our book was an opportunity that brought him back into fashion in the media system. That's why, in my opinion, and not because I wrote it, the book is one of the most significant achievements in the media system in recent years, the story of a character that has been completely reconditioned. In my opinion, through our book Bisignani expressed a desire to be seen, to emerge from the shadows.*

In brief, the words of the interviewee indirectly confirm that in Italy, if you really want to influence the country's political decisions, it is necessary to remain and move in the shadows. However, when this power fades then in some way you need to become more visible, making what you have been doing for years public, by describing how you have come to make certain decisions and decide certain appointments. This might explain the decision Bisignani took to publish *L'uomo che*

*sussurra ai potenti* (lit. *The Man Who Whispers To The Powerful*) in 2013 and then, in 2015, again in collaboration with Madron, his second book-length interview *I potenti al tempo di Renzi* (lit. *The Powerful At The Time Of Renzi*) (Chiarelettere, 2015). Bisignani has also recently published a novel *Il direttore* (lit. *The Editor*) (Chiarelettere, 2014), a book set in the offices of an Italian newspaper that would appear to be *Corriere della Sera*.

#### **4. Bisignani and his network of personal relations**

Bisignani's network of personal relations was cultivated in total darkness, far from the bright light of the media spotlight. Madron explains the underlying reasons:

*Bisignani has done his job well... one is able to work better in the shadows, without being picked up by the media system, and he has managed to keep up the image of a man who always works well behind the scenes... It is the management of this method that counts... Anyone can build their own network, but if he is not able to manage it, everything collapses.*

Bisignani, as repeatedly pointed out by the interviewee, "is a person who omits nothing", and clearly understands that for the journalists it is very relevant to build a close relationship with their source; this is a relationship based on trust, mutual interdependence and, above all, on informality. A relationship created by one to one interaction, with phone calls, dinners, cocktails, invitations to sporting events, and gifts: these are decisive factors in building a fiduciary relationship between the two actors. There is a passage of the interview with Madron that explains this:

*Bisignani as a journalist did well to introduce himself into other worlds, making use of important friendships. It was, for example, Licio Gelli, head of the Italian Freemasons, who put him in contact with the unapproachable General of the Carabinieri. Once such a contact has been established, the most important friendships no longer count. Rather you have to build a solid relationship that is created by making a phone call a week, asking questions like "how is your daughter, how was your holiday in the mountains". In short, these relationships must be cultivated to build a network: you must not be too suffocating, and never betray confidences, because if a source says not to write something, a journalist should not do it, otherwise the fiduciary relationship is undermined.*

We do not forget that Bisignani was first and foremost a journalist, who through this profession came into contact with political and institutional power. To put it more exactly, he was skilful to exploit the main features of Italian media system mentioned in the introduction of this report. A system in which the main journalists function is to develop and consolidate relationships with the political leaders, ministers, businessmen, secret services, industrial groups (that, as just observed, often are the owners of papers), in order to obtain information useful for their papers. As journalists

use politicians and businessmen to get confidential information, so, in turn, do politicians and businessmen use journalists to secure positive media coverage and to influence the public opinion. The result is that the boundaries between journalism, politics and business are blurred. Interpersonal relationships with a leading politicians or important industrialists are often the reason why a journalist obtains advancements in his/her career. Moreover, the journalist, within a similar combination between media, politics and business power, can start a prominent career becoming a powerful person able to affect the the policy-making process; as was the case of Luigi Bisignani, who very few Italians know, but who has been described in recent years as one of the most influential fixer locating at top of political system.

In other words, journalism helped Bisignani to enter certain circles, and understand how to behave in these situations. And it was thanks to journalism that he managed to create a series of contacts that would prove essential over the years, as he became a central figure in Italian political power. Therefore, one could say that the case of Bisignani is that of a journalist who has transformed his sources into a more profitable instrument for his career.

In this way, Bisignani himself became a valuable source of information for journalists from many papers and politicians from various parties. This change in Bisignani's role (from journalist to source of information) took place, firstly, when he became head of the press office for Stamatii, minister and confidant of Giulio Andreotti, and secondly, when he became head of external relations for the Ferruzzi group. Since that moment everyone needed Bisignani. Firstly, the editors of the main Italian newspapers needed the information Bisignani possessed. As recounted in the book *L'uomo che sussurra ai potenti*, at the end of the 1970s Bisignani came into contact with the man who, a few years earlier (1976), had founded the main newspaper of the Italian left, and the second national newspaper in terms of circulation, *la Repubblica*. The co-founder of this newspaper, Eugenio Scalfari, became close to Bisignani not by accidently: Bisignani's role as head of a minister's press office was considered extremely important for an editor, and Bisignani's own words confirm this: "The chief press officer of an important minister is a key interlocutor for an editor, because he is able to verify economic and political news in real-time. And Scalfari had proof that I never peddled falsehoods" (Madron, Bisignani, 2013, p. 202).

Bisignani's words illustrate how the foundation of the relationship established with Scalfari was a great degree of trust, which corresponds with the relationship between journalist and source described by Enzo Forcella, well-known Italian political journalist, in his essay *Millecinquecento lettori* (lit. *One Thousand Five Hundred Readers*) (1959): "[...] they have breakfast together every morning... at Christmas, and when it is very important, even at Easter, the political journalist receives many cases of liquor from his admirers. He is invited to every reception. He is awarded

prizes. If he has to deal with bureaucracy, he will get what he wants more easily than the average citizen...” The informality of the relationship between a journalist and his source is clear in the relationship between Bisignani and Scalfari, as recounted by Bisignani himself: “Every time I helped him with a scoop he would send me a bottle of champagne” (Madron, Bisignani, 2013, p. 202). There is one important difference from the citation from Forcella: in this case, it is the political journalist (Scalfari) that sends gifts to his source (Bisignani), and not vice versa. What was created between Bisignani and Scalfari was therefore a continuum of mutual interests: each of the two actors in question represented a genuine resource for the other; these are interests that, among other things, come into existence by virtue of informal relations, which in this case helped to strengthen their friendship and complicity.

Furthermore, this relationship allowed Bisignani, once his time as the head of the press office for the minister Stamatii had come to an end, to ask Scalfari to collaborate with *la Repubblica*. Their proposed collaboration eventually came to nothing, but Scalfari put in a good word with the weekly *L'Espresso* with which Bisignani would collaborate some years later.

Bisignani, therefore, became a valuable source for many journalists, as the relationship with Scalfari shows, principally because he was close to those in power, and represented a direct contact to many important figures in Italian politics. Another aspect that deserves to be highlighted is that Bisignani remained a valuable source even when he was no longer a spokesman for the minister Stamatii. Proof of this the fact that in the mid 1980s Ferruccio de Bortoli, then a well-known journalist with *Corriere della Sera*, of which he became editor in 1997, needed to get to know Bisignani. At that time, Bisignani, having left the role of spokesman for the minister, had returned to journalism, becoming managing editor of ANSA in 1988. He gradually distanced himself from ANSA in 1989, before becoming part of the FIFA World Cup organizing committee for Italia '90 under Luca Cordero di Montezemolo, a prominent figure in the world of the economy and Italian sports.

Returning to De Bortoli, he regularly consulted with Bisignani to confirm news or gossip: “At around ten o'clock in the evening, when the newspaper was closing, Ferruccio often got in touch via SMS for confirmation of a news item, an appointment, or the enactment of new laws” (Madron, Bisignani, 2013, p. 206). But there was much more to the relationship between Bisignani and de Bortoli: as he recounted in detail in the book *L'uomo che sussurra ai potenti*, Bisignani was an important intermediary between the editor of the *Corriere della Sera* and the corridors of power in Rome. For example, Bisignani facilitated the relationship between de Bortoli and Cesare Geronzi, a well-known Italian banker who was, at the time of their meeting, president of Mediobanca, an important Italian bank. In addition, during the Berlusconi governments, de Bortoli often got in

touch with Bisignani to obtain news of a political nature. Moreover, because of the good relationship established with de Bortoli, it was common that politicians would approach Bisignani confidentially to mediate with the editor of *Corriere della Sera*, to press for the publication of interviews or letters. Based on this situation, the role of Bisignani can be described as that of a “bridge builder”, a figure capable of fostering mediation or agreements. Clearer still, in this respect, are the words of Madron:

*Bisignani is a manager of knowledge, networks, sources, and relationships: a facilitator capable of bringing very different worlds into contact. He is the one who can skip the intermediate steps in the resolution of problems.*

The other aspect that should be addressed in this report is that the editors of both major Italian newspapers at some point turned their backs on Bisignani, going so far as to deny their relationship. There are two reasons for this: firstly, the involvement of Bisignani in the P4 scandal (2011); secondly, to some extent coinciding with the P4 scandal, the slow decline of the two figures who were primary references for Bisignani’s power of influence: Giulio Andreotti and Berlusconi. Scalfari and De Bortoli distanced themselves from Bisignani in different ways. The former published an article in *la Repubblica*, of which he was no longer editor, but remained one of the leading editorialists, on June 26, 2011, entitled *Una zattera in tempesta senza timore* (lit. *A raft in a storm without fear*), where he wrote:

*“What does the Bisignani case represent, seeing as it has exploded at the same time as a positive awakening of the national consciousness? The Bisignani case is the epilogue of a kingdom, a way of conducting affairs, a structural deviance that is unfortunately nothing new for Italian society. Some see this as an argument for the legalization of lobbies, but that is not what is being dealt with here. The Bisignani system is not a lobby: it does not protect a specific and legitimate interest in the cold light of day. The Bisignani system is the pooling of confidential information of all kinds, from sources of all kinds, to be used to achieve objectives of all kinds. This information concerns legal proceedings, tenders and procurement, appointments in the government, public authorities, newspapers, and television. The sources are ministers, the judiciary, businessmen, fixers, and even the private offices of the Carabinieri, intelligence services, and above all the Financial Guard. This is a strange destiny for this law enforcement agency. This is the police force that pursues tax evaders and the corrupt with the most tenacity and lucidity, but is also that which, especially at the level of the General Command, has been associated with three decades of clans and networks of ill repute. The aim of this P4 is to confer benefits on the sources. This is Freemasonry on an immense scale, which does not even have the form of a secret society, as was the case with P2. Bisignani, who was a member of the P2, has a past, and was convicted of the wrongdoings he did then; his P4 is therefore a much more extensive network, but also much lighter, held together by corruption, and Bisignani is the confessor of all. Everyone confesses, not to be forgiven, but because their confessions are part of a trade off and have a productive value. These confessions are the assets and goodwill of the P4, and gathering them together is the wealth of Bisignani.”*

Scalfari clearly explains how the Bisignani system worked, omitting however that the information held and shared by Bisignani is “the same which he himself had once drawn heavily on, but perhaps he has forgotten” (Bisignani, Madron, 2013, p. 203).

By contrast, when the P4 case broke in 2011, De Bortoli decided to use *Corriere della Sera* to publish many of the tapped conversations that had emerged during the investigation of the affair. Bisignani’s name often appeared among these, in reference to certain conversations with journalists. As a result, *Corriere della Sera* paid great attention to the judicial investigation, with a focus on the central role of Bisignani within the P4. All this was done while at the same time attempting to protect the editor de Bortoli, as one interception and one text message between the editor and Bisignani were never published during the investigation: “To tell the truth about our relationship would have been simpler, and more transparent for the readers... every so often there returns... a curiosity to know... why Ferruccio did not admit that I was, as well as his source, also his friend” (Madron, Bisignani, p. 209-210).

## **5. Bisignani and the power of influence**

The previous paragraph featured a number of examples that demonstrate the extent to which Bisignani had been able to mediate with the leading figures in Italian journalism, to the point of becoming one of their most important sources, at least until he was recognized as the undisputed leader of a network capable of conditioning the life of the country. There are also numerous other examples that illustrate the strength Bisignani had in influencing appointments to significant political positions. The words of Madron demonstrate the extent of Bisignani’s power of influence:

*Bisignani is a placer of men, an arranger, in the sense that he managed, coordinated, and attempted to position his men. He tried to place people in his circle in key roles, seeking to influence those that had to make the appointment. The decision maker in question could be a general in the Carabinieri, the prime minister, the minister of defence, etc.*

The areas where Bisignani exercised his power of influence were varied. For example, in 2007, as recounted by Madron and described in the book *L'uomo che sussurra ai potenti*, during the merger of two banks, Capitalia and Unicredit, the aforementioned Geronzi sought advice from Bisignani as to whom his advisor in the new bank should be. It was Bisignani that suggested a person close to him, Maurizio Beretta, as president of the Football League in 2009, a position that he still holds. The managers of many important companies were also chosen by Bisignani; at Eni (the Italian multinational oil and gas company, one of the most important Italian companies), for example, Bisignani had a very strong presence. Paolo Scaroni, CEO of Eni from 2005 to 2014, was

an appointment decided by Bisignani, while many middle managers at Eni also owe their positions to Bisignani.

Furthermore, in 2009 Bisignani was behind the appointment of Daniela Santanchè, now a member of Forza Italia, but at that time a representative of Alleanza Nazionale (*lit. National Alliance*), as undersecretary of the fourth Berlusconi government, as confirmed by Bisignani himself in article published by *il Sole 24 Ore* on June 23, 2011, with the heading *Bisignani: la mia rete di contatti (lit. Bisignani: my network of contacts)*:

*I went to great lengths to obtain the nomination to Undersecretary for Daniela Santanchè... above all asking Italo Bocchino, Andrea Ronchi and Ignazio La Russa (prominent members of the National Alliance) to drop the veto of Gianfranco Fini (president of the National Alliance) on the appointment.*

This example is of interest as it once again shows the strength of Bisignani's influence, as the president of the National Alliance's veto on the nomination of Santanchè did indeed fall thanks to the intermediation of Bisignani.

Bisignani's power of influence was also strong at the public broadcaster RAI. A curious episode was presented in an article published by *Il Fatto quotidiano* on June 13, 2011 with the headline *Masi ammette: la lettera di licenziamento per Santoro la scrisse Bisignani (lit. Masi admits the letter of dismissal for Santoro was written by Bisignani)*, which confirms that Bisignani was close to the top executives at RAI, and in particular Mauro Masi, the Director General from 2009 to 2011. The story refers to an incident in October 2010 when the presenter Michele Santoro, well-known host of a political talk show broadcast by RAI 2, launched an on-air tirade against the RAI managers he believed had undermined his freedom of expression. This outburst from Santoro led to his being suspended from the show for 10 days. The situation was repeated on 25 January 2011, when Masi phoned Santoro during the live broadcast to disassociate himself from the content of the show. This episode was followed by several phone calls between Bisignani and Masi. After discussing a variety of strategies, Masi came to ask Bisignani to write a letter of dismissal for the presenter. As Masi himself admitted to the journalist from *Fatto quotidiano*:

*I ask myself why I asked Bisignani to write a letter of dismissal for Santoro... I turned to Bisignani because he is part of the institutional world, on account of his knowledge of the political world. [...] I used Bisignani to get an idea of the real views of Gianni Letta (the right-hand man of Silvio Berlusconi, who was then prime minister), with whom I have a formal relationship, and Bisignani knows much better. I asked Bisignani to find out Letta's opinion about the dismissal of Santoro.*

At this point it should be clear that Bisignani was a skilled weaver of relationships, which he used to influence decision-making processes: his diplomatic art always remained in the shadows, allowing him to intervene in a wide variety of sectors. Bisignani took care of anything he was asked to, even to the extent of being asked to suggest testimonials for advertising campaigns. Madron confirmed all this during the interview, telling us about an episode he had personally witnessed:

*Last year the tennis player Flavia Pennetta, who would go on to win the US Open, had just reached the semi-finals, and while we were travelling to Gubbio, Bisignani got a message on his mobile phone. He said “ah, that is Pennetta thanking me”, and I asked “why?”. He replied “I sent her a good luck message before the game”. I asked “but how do you know Pennetta?”, and he answered “I know her because when Enel wanted to do a commercial, I had the idea of putting her together with Federica Pellegrini, the swimmer. They never made the ad in the end, but I did get to present her to the managing director of Enel, so that’s how I know her”. That should give you an idea of how Bisignani is a great cultivator of relationships.*

Finally, to fully understand the figure of Bisignani it would be productive to examine the manner to which he has been covered in the major national newspapers over the years.

The first element that emerges is that, very few articles mentioned Bisignani, with long periods such as that between 2001 and 2006, with no reference at all to one of the most influential people in Italy in articles published by the three most widely read newspapers in the country. This silence can only be explained in one way: these were the years, following his conviction in the Enimont trial (1998), during which Bisignani became a trusted advisor of Silvio Berlusconi, then the prime minister, and therefore once again came to play an important role on the chessboard of Italian political power.

The lack of interviews, except for a few conceded in recent times, and even photos, demonstrates how the Italian press only included Bisignani in reports when they were obliged to cover him, namely when he was involved in corruption scandals (Tangentopoli, P2 and P4 Lodge scandal). The reason the newspapers behaved like this was not due to a lack of interest in the Bisignani case, but rather a genuine absence of material to discuss. It should not be forgotten, and this is only an assumption, that Bisignani has always had close relationships with editors and journalists at a number of newspapers, so one might suppose that this silence on the part of the newspapers in question also stems from the fact that Bisignani has always been able to control the flow of information about him. And the reason is simple: the decision not to foster a reputation in the media, which would undoubtedly have meant an end to the shadow, the dark character that had always distinguished Bisignani, and made it possible for him to manoeuvre in any direction he chose.

Going into a more detailed analysis of the (few) articles regarding Bisignani, it is interesting to note the different ways he is described: *la Repubblica* defines him as a “puppet master”, and “the

anthropological prototype of a fixer”<sup>22</sup>; *il Corriere della Sera* speaks of him as a “handyman lackey who is willing to get his hands dirty”<sup>23</sup>; while *la Stampa*, says “more than transversal man, Bisignani is a diagonal man”, in the sense that his power follows a precise straight line that begins with membership of a secret lodge, and continues to the Vatican, before reaching the office of the prime minister of Italy<sup>24</sup>. Other articles focus on the importance of the relationships that have allowed Bisignani to become the fulcrum of a form of power that has not always been transparent. Indeed, by 1994 *Corriere della Sera* had already understood the scope and significance of this network:

*Bisignani resigned himself to moving in the shadows. And, tirelessly, he developed his contacts with notables in parliament, the Vatican, the army, businesses, and banking. Power is not always visible. He had free access to the office of Andreotti, and never denied his relationship with Licio Gelli, Venerable Master of the clandestine P2 lodge. He boasted many other important friendships: from the President of the Republic Francesco Cossiga, to Romano Prodi, early in his career at the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction, from Lamberto Dini, Director of the Bank of Italy, up to politicians, financiers, managers, soldiers, fixers, and well known and less well known actors*<sup>25</sup>.

*La Repubblica* also talked about Bisignani’s network:

*The dowry of Luigi Bisignani... consists of a wealth of contacts and knowledge stemming from both from his almost filial relationship with Andreotti, and 20 years of activity at ANSA.*

This excerpt is considered particularly important because it underlines, and therefore confirms, what has already been said about the basis on which these relationships were constructed: on the one hand, ANSA, the fertile ground on which Bisignani started to cultivate his own network, first as a journalist and then as a source, and on the other, the figure of Andreotti, who represents a pivotal cornerstone for Bisignani, allowing him to come into contact with the most influential figures in the country.

Finally, the fact remains that the number of articles that speak exclusively about the figure of Bisignani is extremely limited, and only increases, as mentioned above, when Bisignani is involved in corruption scandals. One could hypothesize that, had Bisignani never been named in an investigation, it is quite possible that he would still be plotting in the shadows today, much as he had been allowed to do so long in the past.

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<sup>22</sup> A. Statera, *Il burattinaio nell’ombra* (lit. *The puppeteer in the shadows*), *la Repubblica*, 16 June 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Ivo Caizzi, *Portaborse con vocazione letteraria. Andreotti il suo primo sponsor* (lit. *Flunkey with a literary vocation, Andreotti his first sponsor*), nel *Corriere della Sera*, 8 January 1994.

<sup>24</sup> P. Colonnello, *Quelle amicizie diagonali che hanno reso potente Gigi* (lit. *The diagonal friendships that have made Gigi powerful*), *La Stampa*, 16 June 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Ivo Caizzi, *Portaborse con vocazione letteraria. Andreotti il suo primo sponsor* (lit. *Flunkey with a literary vocation, Andreotti his first sponsor*), *Corriere della Sera*, 8 January 1994.

## 6. Conclusions

The aim of this report has been to examine the extent to which the “dark” nature that has always characterized Bisignani is connected with the concepts of “power” on the one hand and that of “relationships” on the other. Above all, the basic assumption of the analysis refers to the correlation between Luigi Bisignani, his power, his relationships and everything derived from them, and the world of journalism, the field from where everything began. This is a dense network of relationships, mainly built thanks to his profession as a journalist, which put him in contact with areas of corrupt power, hence the idea of including the Bisignani case in the category of “active corruptor”.

In fact, it was precisely the field of journalism that in a sense legitimised many of the aspects discussed in this paper. Journalism allowed Bisignani to develop relationships, the importance of which was extremely relevant, allowing him to touch upon and, in a certain sense, control, many possible spheres. These were relationships which in turn were able to exist solely and exclusively thanks to the way in which they were managed, namely in darkness, far from the glare of the media spotlight. Bisignani’s choice to act in the shadows was dictated, once again, by an entirely Italian peculiarity, which sees an authentic justification in the darkness, or better, in confidentiality, a prerogative to exercise that power to which many aspire, but very few manage to reach.

It is therefore no surprise when Bisignani is labelled as the “bogeyman”, the “transversal man”, and “the man in the shadows”, as it was the undergrowth of Italian power that created Bisignani, the Grey Cardinal of Italian politics, the man who whispers to the powerful. Bisignani is the result of an interweaving of journalism, economics and politics – which is strong enough in Italy to condition the information system in the country.

# The Villa in Monte-Carlo

(Roberto Mincigrucci and Marco Mazzoni)

## 1. Introduction

As part of our examination of the relationship between the media and corruption, we have selected the scandal known as the “Villa in Monte-Carlo” as a case study. We have chosen this case because it could be considered a representative example of the Italian investigative journalism, in which a journalist carries out an active investigation that helps bring an unlawful act to light, rather than merely reporting on legal proceedings. As the data collected in the Italian HACA report confirm, investigation is not a common practice in the Italian journalistic culture, while the possible misconduct committed by the former Berlusconi’s political ally Gianfranco Fini and his relatives was one of the few cases disclosed by a newspaper. Through this case, we would like to highlight the existence of an “Italian Style” investigative journalism. Indeed, the timing of the publication of the scoop in the press, and the type of coverage given to the Fini’s scandal, reflect many characteristics of the Italian media system. In particular, the scandal of the villa in Monte-Carlo demonstrates how the existence of “impure publisher” in Italy, that is a print press that is property of businessmen and corporations interested not just at making money but at influencing public discourse and decision making, may also have consequences for the coverage of important issues such as corruption. The scandal of the villa in Monte-Carlo also allows us to highlight another aspect of the Italian press, namely its partisanship. A partisan newspaper not only supports a particular political party, but also attacks the enemies of the party that it supports. The case in point is quite unique, as due to a variety of circumstances, which will be explained below, the main centre-left newspaper, *la Repubblica*, found itself in the position of supporting a leading right wing politician, in order to attack a historic enemy.

There are several interesting features that this case highlights: it has a very intricate plot with a variety of backgrounds which have to be illustrated to better understand the main evidences of this research. Furthermore, the most important evidence is the emergence of the instrumental use that some newspapers make of corruption scandals. In our case, this involves the publication by a newspaper owned by the Berlusconi family, *Il Giornale*, of the scoop that would severely damage Fini’s reputation. In detail, we will show how *Il Giornale*, a Berlusconi owned newspaper, and *Libero*, a newspaper very close to Berlusconi and the centre-right, with the former acting as

*initiator* and the second as *facilitator*, broke this story on their front pages in order to attack Fini and defend the leader, Berlusconi, and his political party, *Popolo della Libertà* (*lit. The People of Freedom*), they support. But to understand the instrumentalization behind the journalistic investigation it will be explained who is Gianfranco Fini, it will be given a little account about his political career and above all it will be recreated the main political circumstance.

## 2. The plot

**Table 1: The figures involved in the scandal**

Gianfranco Fini	The former speaker of the Italian House of Commons and Berlusconi's political ally. He was, along with Berlusconi, the co-founder of <i>il Popolo della Libertà</i> ( <i>lit. The People of Freedom</i> ), the main party in the government. In 2010 he broke the alliance with Berlusconi.
Silvio Berlusconi	The former Italian Prime Minister. He was, along with Fini, the co-founder of <i>il Popolo della Libertà</i> ( <i>lit. The People of Freedom</i> ). He was also the publisher of <i>Il Giornale</i> .
Giancarlo Tulliani	Fini's brother-in-law. He was the owner of the off-shore company Timara and the resident of the house in Montecarlo.
Elisabetta Tulliani	Fini's partner. Sister of Giancarlo Tulliani.
Annamaria Colleoni	Former owner of the house in Montecarlo. She devised the house to Fini's party.
Gian Marco Chiocci	Former journalist of <i>Il Giornale</i> . He published the news that Tulliani was the resident of the house in Montecarlo.
Valter Lavitola	An influential mason and fixer, and the whistleblower of the scandal. He was also the editor of an Italian newspaper called "L'Avanti!".

**Table 2: The main stages in the scandal**

1995	Fini met the countess Colleoni during a political dinner and became aware of the property in Monte-Carlo for the first time.
12 June 1999	The countess Colleoni dies and leaves her entire inheritance to Fini's party Alleanza Nazionale (including the villa).
Between 2000 2005	Many offers are received for the sale of the property, but all are rejected.
2008	The villa is sold to the offshore company Printemps, which then sells it on to Timara Ltd.
2009	Timara begins renovation work on the apartment and then enters into a lease agreement with Giancarlo Tulliani.
22 April 2010	Berlusconi and Fini quarrel during the national council of the PDL, with Fini uttering the famous phrase "What are you going to do? Drive me out?"
28 July 2010	Il Giornale published the news that Tulliani was the resident of the house in Montecarlo.
29 July 2010	The office of the presidency of the PDL expels Fini from the party.
29 July 2010	Former members of AN lodge a complaint with the Prosecutor about Fini.
30 July 2010	It is discovered that Giancarlo Tulliani has been following the restoration work.
5 August 2010	The Rome prosecutor begins an investigation against undisclosed parties with the assumption of crimes of embezzlement and aggravated fraud.
26 October 2010	The prosecutor asks for the investigation of Gianfranco Fini to be archived.

The tables 1 and 2 recapitulate the main stage of the event. However, to better understand the main features of the scandal it should be useful to divide the story in three major points: the prior event of the scandal, the development of the journalistic investigation and the political background. Gianfranco Fini has been accused of having embezzled a property in Montecarlo. It was owned by the Countess Annamaria Colleoni, an Italian rich heiress of fascist family origins. She was a committed member of the party that was heir to the fascist movement: Alleanza Nazionale - AN (*lit. the National Alliance*)<sup>26</sup> led by Gianfranco Fini. She met Fini during a political dinner and she informed him about her intention to bequeath her entire fortune to the party. Therefore, on the death of the Countess, on 1999, all of her assets passed to AN, with an estimated value of about eight

<sup>26</sup> Alleanza Nazionale (*lit. National Alliance*) was a right-wing party that was heir to the extreme right MSI. It merged with Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia in 2007 to form il Popolo della Libertà (*lit. the People of Freedom*), the main centre-right party in Italy.

billion lire, between current accounts, bonds, and various properties, including the apartment in Monte-Carlo. Between 2000 and 2005 the Monte-Carlo property attracted a number of offers. The last of these, amounting to €1.5 million, was made in late 2005, on behalf of some neighbours. As with all other offers, this was ignored. In 2008, however, the property in the Principality of Monaco was sold by AN to the offshore company Printemps Ltd, based in the tax haven of St. Lucia in the Caribbean, for about €300,000. Printemps immediately sold the property to the offshore company Timara Ltd. The owners of the apartment, Timara, started renovation work in 2009, and then entered into a rental agreement with Giancarlo Tulliani, brother of Elisabetta Tulliani, the partner of the Speaker of the House, Gianfranco Fini, with rent fixed at an unspecified amount.

This whole affair remained unknown to the general public until Gian Marco Chiocci's<sup>27</sup> journalistic investigation. At the time he was a journalist of the Berlusconi owned newspaper *Il Giornale*, and he could be considered the *initiator* of the story. In fact he went to Montecarlo, located the house and discovered that the apartment was inhabited by Giancarlo Tulliani, brother in law of Gianfranco Fini. On July 28, 2010 Chiocci published the news on the front page of *Il Giornale*, starting the ball rolling and transforming the case in a “mediated scandal” according to Thompson definition (2000). He described the story as a mystery novel, alluding to a Fini's misdemeanour of misusing party's assets for private gain. The same day *Libero* (another right-wing newspaper) boosted the news, playing the role of *facilitator* according to our typologies. In the days after almost all of Italian newspapers debated about the story, but with significant differences in tones and points of views according to their political affiliation. Over the time the scandal deepened and became more serious because Fini attempted to rely on explanations, denials or responses involving lies and half-truths, and the right-wing newspapers made intensive efforts to find Fini's misconducts evidences. In this regard is important to point out that *Libero's* and *Il Giornale's* journalists weren't alone in the investigation and in the research of the proofs. In fact, in the course of time, emerged that the whistleblower of the scandal was Valter Lavitola<sup>28</sup>, an Italian journalist and fixer close to Berlusconi which was in business with the St. Lucia's Minister of Justice. Lavitola was accused by Fini's collaborators to be responsible for sharing the most important document of the scandal, in which the Minister of St. Lucia confirmed that Tulliani was the owner of the offshore company Printemps Ltd, irretrievably compromising Fini. Lavitola's involvement in the investigation demonstrates that around the case was engaged a network bigger than a simple journalists' working

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27 Today Chiocci is the editor of the newspaper *Il Tempo*, a leading Roman newspaper sympathetic to the centre right.

28 Valter Lavitola was also the editor of an Italian newspaper called “L'Avanti!”. But he was an influential mason and fixer with connection with secret services. During the scandal, he was accused to be a mercenary in the pay of Berlusconi. In spite of his low diffusion, “L'Avanti!” published an important documents confirming Tulliani's engagement in the trade.

team, including also senior members of St Lucia's government and perhaps secret services, furthermore all the indications are that Berlusconi got busy to spotlight Fini's misdemeanour.

After Chiocci's journalistic investigation, the Rome prosecutor launched an inquiry involving undisclosed parties on the basis of the filed complaint, with the assumption of crimes of embezzlement and serious fraud. However, a few months later, the prosecutor decided to dismiss the investigation and not condemn both Fini and Tulliani, as it was not possible to prove any fraudulent wrongdoing in the deal.

For which reason should Berlusconi have damaged one of the main figures of his party? For a clear understanding of the situation it would be opportune to outline the political events in Fini's career during the period under review. 2010 was a crucial year for Fini, whose activities had a major impact on the Italian political situation, in particular on the fourth Berlusconi government. In 2010 Fini was Speaker of the House of Commons and was, along with Silvio Berlusconi, the co-founder of *il Popolo della Libertà* (lit. *The People of Freedom*), the main party in the government created by the merger between Fini's AN and Berlusconi's *Forza Italia*. Nevertheless, the months preceding the outbreak of the scandal had seen Fini express a number of concerns about the actions of the Berlusconi government and the organisation of the party.

On April 22 of that year, on the occasion of the national council of the PDL, the political battle between Berlusconi and Fini reached its culmination, with the latter uttering the famous provocation "What are you going to do? Drive me out?" in front of the cameras of the major Italian networks. In the following months, the Italian press dedicated ample coverage to the power struggle between the two leaders of the Italian centre right. The definitive separation came the day after the scandal of the villa in Monte-Carlo broke, 29 July 2010. The office of the presidency of the PDL defined Fini's behaviour as "incompatible with the principles of the People of Freedom, with the commitments undertaken to the electorate, and the political activity of the People of Freedom"<sup>29</sup>, and on these grounds Fini was ousted from the party. The next day Fini announced that, having been effectively expelled from the party, he would launch a new parliamentary group, called *Futuro e Libertà per l'Italia* (lit. *Future and freedom for Italy*).

The summer of 2010 was a particularly turbulent period for Fini, as on the one hand he was engaged in establishing an autonomous parliamentary group outside the PDL, while on the other he was being assailed by articles from right-wing newspapers criticizing both his political activities and his private life, through the scandal of the villa in Monte-Carlo. Such attacks were defined by

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<sup>29</sup> Statement from the office of the presidency of the PDL, *Corriere della Sera*, 20 July 2010  
[http://www.corriere.it/politica/10\\_luglio\\_29/pdl-bozza-documento\\_45dc4240-9b4d-11df-ad9d-00144f02aabe.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/politica/10_luglio_29/pdl-bozza-documento_45dc4240-9b4d-11df-ad9d-00144f02aabe.shtml)  
(Last consulted 2/11/15).

Fini as an “lapidazione di tipo islamico” (lit. Islamic style stoning)<sup>30</sup> during an interview in a political meeting on 5 September 2010<sup>31</sup>. On 8 September, with the resumption of parliamentary work, Fini formally left the PDL parliamentary group to launch *Futuro e Libertà* (lit. *Future and Freedom for Italy*), which attracted the support of 34 deputies and 10 senators who left the PDL. Initially he promised to continue to support the fourth Berlusconi government, but within a few weeks his party left every government post, and presented a no-confidence motion in Parliament. This was defeated in both chambers on December 14 2010.

### 3. Quantitative analysis of the coverage of the Villa of Monte-Carlo scandal

**Table 3: The selected newspapers**

NEWSPAPER	
Il Giornale	This is the newspaper which first broke the news and devoted ample space to the story for many months. The <i>initiator</i> of case.
Libero	Together with Il Giornale this is the newspaper which paid most attention to the scandal.
la Repubblica	Frequently attacked by Libero and Il Giornale as it was considered the main defender of Fini.
Corriere della Sera	The first newspaper in Italy by circulation.
La Stampa	The fourth newspaper in Italy by circulation.

The first two are the newspapers which broke the news, and gave most prominence to the scandal. *Libero*, while not directly owned by Berlusconi, is a centre-right newspaper that at the time placed it in a pro-government position. *La Repubblica* was chosen as it offers a different perspective from the previous two publications. It has the highest circulation among the newspapers that criticized the actions of the government at the time, to the extent that other media outlets defined it as the main defender of Fini. *Corriere della Sera* and *La Stampa* are two quality newspapers that are less inclined than those previously mentioned to editorialize, adopting a more neutral narrative style. They were selected because they are the first and the fifth largest newspapers in Italy by circulation. Day by day research was performed on the number of articles devoted to the case in each newspaper; for *la Repubblica*, *Corriere della Sera* and *La Stampa* the online archives available on the websites of the three newspapers were consulted; for *Libero* and *Il Giornale* the print editions

<sup>30</sup> “AN: Fini, an Islamic style stoning against my family”, in Adnkronos 5 September 2010 [http://www1.adnkronos.com/Archivio/AdnAgenzia/2010/09/05/Politica/An-Fini-contro-mia-famiglia-lapidazione-di-tipo-islamico\\_171202.php](http://www1.adnkronos.com/Archivio/AdnAgenzia/2010/09/05/Politica/An-Fini-contro-mia-famiglia-lapidazione-di-tipo-islamico_171202.php) (Ultima consultazione 2/11/15)

<sup>31</sup> [https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gianfranco\\_Fini\\_-\\_cite\\_note-28](https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gianfranco_Fini_-_cite_note-28)

were consulted in the archives of the Augusta Library in Perugia. To analyze the trend in the coverage of the case the articles have been divided into periods of fifteen days.<sup>32</sup>

**Table 4: Number of articles**

NEWSPAPER	NUMBER OF ARTICLES
Il Giornale	298
Libero	243
La Repubblica	162
Corriere della Sera	153
La Stampa	80

**Figure 1: Trends in the coverage**

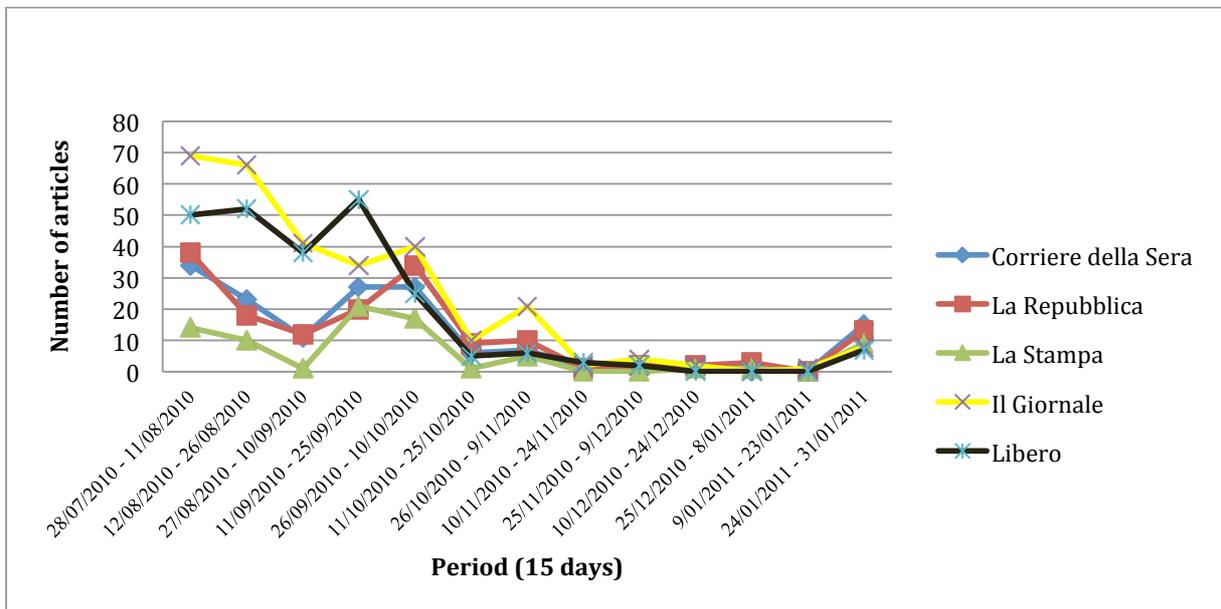


Table 4 and Figure 1 demonstrate that *Il Giornale* and *Libero*, the *initiator* and *facilitator* of the scandal, are the newspapers that dedicated most space to the affair, with a total of 298 items for the former and 243 for the latter. The Berlusconi family’s newspaper broke the news, launching a campaign against the former ally of Silvio Berlusconi. The villa in Monte-Carlo became the main focus of *Il Giornale* and *Libero*, which for three months consistently revealed news and background

<sup>32</sup> The time frame is divided into 13 periods: July 28 2010 - August 11 2010; August 12 2010 - August 26 2010; 27 August 2010 - 10 September 2010; September 11 2010 - September 25 2010; September 26 2010 - October 10 2010; October 11 2010 - October 25 2010; October 26 2010 - November 9 2010; November 10, 2010 - November 24 2010; 25 November 2010 - 9 December 2010; December 10 2010 - December 24 2010; December 25 2010 - January 8 2011; 9 January 2011 - January 23 2011; 24 January 2011 - 31 January 2011

information about the affair, with new stories appearing on the front page on a daily basis, portraying Gianfranco Fini and his family in the worst possible light.

*La Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera* dedicated an almost identical amount of space to the affair: the former with 162 articles, the second with 153 articles. *La Stampa*, however, appeared to be less interested in the story, dedicating only 80 articles to the scandal of the villa in Monte-Carlo.

In the period July 28, 2010 - August 11, 2010, the newspaper with the most coverage was *Il Giornale* with 69 articles, followed by *Libero* with 50, *la Repubblica* with 38, *Corriere della Sera* with 34, and *La Stampa* with 14 articles. In the period 26 September, 2010 – 10 October, 2010 it is interesting to make a comparison between *la Repubblica* and *Il Giornale*: in these 15 days, both newspapers published an almost equal number of articles. From November until the end of the timeframe in question, all five newspapers published the same number of articles, with a peak in the final weeks of January, with the official confirmation from the authorities in St. Lucia that Tulliani was indeed the owner of the villa in Monte-Carlo.

This analysis of the trends in the coverage highlights three phases in the media's treatment of the affair. The first phase includes the initial publication of the scandal, from late July to early September. *Il Giornale* and *Libero* play a leading role, breaking the news first, and providing background, developments and insights. The other three papers, *la Repubblica*, *Il Corriere della Sera* and *La Stampa*, just report few news on what *Il Giornale* is placing on the first page.

The second phase began in the second half of September, when it had become clear that the story of the Villa in Monte-Carlo was not going to be over in a few weeks, and would see further developments. Above all this is the phase in which Fini established the Futuro e Libertà party (Future and Freedom), and referred to the attacks by the centre-right press as an "Islamic stoning". In this period *Il Giornale* and *Libero*, albeit with some differences between the two newspapers, begin to reduce the number of articles, while the other three papers, above all *la Repubblica*, increased their coverage, which saw them close the gap with the two newspapers of the centre-right. The third phase starts in the month of December, when the case seemed to be running out of steam, before attracting more interest in the second half of January, with the publication of the dossier that confirmed the involvement of Tulliani in the affair.

#### **4. Qualitative analysis of the coverage of the Villa of Monte-Carlo scandal**

The following tables focus more on qualitative aspects of the coverage, analyzing the main headlines that each newspaper devoted to the case. It is important to focus on the various types of headlines: on the one hand *Libero* and *Il Giornale* published headlines that aimed to attack Fini,

very often using sensationalistic language that presented the affair more as a spectacle, while on the other hand *Corriere della Sera* and *La Stampa* opted for more straightforward headlines, and a neutral description of events. The headlines in *la Repubblica* are of interest as, in addition to describing the facts, they also attack *Il Giornale*, accusing the newspaper of compiling a dossier with the intention of destroying Fini’s political career.

**Table 5: The first headline published by each newspaper on the case**

NEWSPAPER	DATE	PLACING	HEADLINE
Il Giornale	28 July 2010	Front page	Fini, his partner, his brother in law, and a strange house in Monte-Carlo.
Libero	28 July 2010	Front Page	Reporter investigates a suspected property of Fini in Monte-Carlo. Stopped by the police.
La Repubblica	29 July 2010	Inside pages	Il Giornale’s latest attack regards a villa in Monte-Carlo
Corriere della Sera	29 July 2010	Inside pages	Il Giornale raises the case of a property in Monte-Carlo
La Stampa	29 July 2010	Inside pages	Il Giornale attacks “Villa in Monte-Carlo for Tulliani’s brother”

Table 5 illustrates how *Libero* and *Il Giornale* devoted their front pages to the story, attacking the Speaker of the House, Fini, with detailed articles that outline the investigation by the journalist Gian Marco Chiocci. Even the manner in which the scandal emerged deserves some reflection: a newspaper that has an exclusive news story tries to keep it quiet until publication, in order to be the first and only media outlet to break the news. However, in this case the news was published in both *Il Giornale* and *Libero* on 28 July confirming that there was a sort of agreement between the two newspapers. The former provides the details of the investigation, while the latter presents a brief overview of the facts, recounting the work of the journalist from *Il Giornale*, as if there had been some sort of partnership involved, in the hope of catching Fini in the crossfire. “*Fini, his partner, his brother in law, and a strange house in Monte-Carlo*” was the front page headline in *Il Giornale* on 28 July, while *Libero* ran with “*Reporter investigating suspected property of Fini in Monte-Carlo stopped by the police*” on the same day. In other words, the two papers acted together.

By contrast, the other newspapers limit themselves to discussing the affair a day later, with short articles on the inside pages, which simply cite the investigation conducted by *Il Giornale*, while maintaining a certain distance from the accusations. They spent around ten days to recognise the prominence of the case and carry it on their front pages: *La Stampa*, for example, carried the headline “*The prosecutor investigates the villa in Monte-Carlo*” on its front page on 6 August; *la Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera* waited until 9 August with almost identical headlines: “*Fini:*

*the truth about the villa*” and *“Fini: my truth about the villa”*, after Fini had written a letter to *Corriere della Sera* giving his version of events. In short, only when Fini prepared his counter-attack they decided to give publicity to the story, publishing his explanations and his accusations to *Il Giornale* and *Libero*.

**Table 6: Other main headlines**

NEWSPAPERS	MAIN HEADLINES
Il Giornale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The “bella vita” of brother in law (11 August 2010)</i></li> <li>• <i>Scalfari<sup>33</sup> challenged me to a duel: I’m in! (17 August 2010)</i></li> <li>• <i>Fini shame on you (And get lost). (28 January 2011)</i></li> <li>• <i>For readers of la Repubblica, Monte-Carlo is not newsworthy. (19 October 2012)</i></li> </ul>
Libero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Villa, Fini explain or go. (31 July 2010)</i></li> <li>• <i>Two Million big baby (1 august 2010)</i></li> </ul>
la Repubblica	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Villa in Monte-Carlo, Fini sues il Giornale. (3 August 2010)</i></li> </ul>
Corriere della Sera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Il Giornale raises the case of a property in Monte-Carlo (29 July 2010)</i></li> </ul>
La Stampa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Fini: nothing to hide on Monte-Carlo (9 August 2010)</i></li> </ul>

Table 6 reveals different approaches in the scandal narrative. Two different approaches instigate a dispute between newspapers with mutual accusation of partisanship in the scandal narrative. The articles in *Libero* and *Il Giornale* attack both Fini and other rivals newspapers for their alleged defence of the Speaker of the House, as confirmed by excerpts from an article:

*“The news is that, for la Repubblica, the news about the case of the villa in Monte-Carlo is not really news.<sup>34</sup>”*. The editorial written by the editor of *Il Giornale* towards a famous columnist of *la Repubblica* entitled *“Scalfari challenged me to a duel: I’m in!”* could be considered a meaningful metaphor of the current dispute engaged by journalists of the two newspapers. The mutual accusations of partisanship are valid for both papers: on the one hand, the two centre-right dailies attack Fini, to weaken his political standing, as he is not anymore an ally with Berlusconi. This is the same reason that *la Repubblica* considers necessary to come to his defence, seeing the possibility to bring down the centre-right government in Fini’s political activity.

<sup>33</sup> Scalfari is the founder of the newspaper “la Repubblica” and columnist for the same newspaper.

<sup>34</sup> “For readers of la Repubblica Monte-Carlo is not newsworthy”, *Il Giornale* 19 October 2012 <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/interni/i-segugi-repubblica-montecarlo-non-vale-notizia-847983.html> (Last access 23 November 2015)

The analysis of the coverage has produced results that confirm the high level of partisanship of Italian press, at least an important part of it: this partisanship is demonstrated by, on the one hand, the timing of the articles, which highlights the close conjunction between the emergence of the scandal and Fini's exit from the PDL, and, on the other, by the tone used in the headlines and articles, and the choice of words used by the centre-right newspapers to discredit the protagonist of the story. *Liberò* confirmed its role as *facilitator* with the negative headline "Two million big baby" on 1 August. The sensationalist tone in which the story was described can be clearly seen in the articles published by *Liberò* and *Il Giornale*. New words such as "tullianismo" and "cognatismo" are coined (in reference to Fini's partner and her brother), and there is a certain predilection for emphatic headlines of questionable taste. Both newspapers examined in depth Fini's private life, investigating Fini's girlfriend past and debating about her old love affairs, or deplored Giancarlo Tulliani's hedonistic behaviours. Moreover, the two newspapers explicitly demanded the resignation of the Speaker of the House of Commons, going beyond the subject matter of the scandal to directly enter into the political debate. The headlines "Fini shame on you (And get lost)" (*Il Giornale* 28 January 2011) and "Villa, Fini explain or go" (*Liberò* 31 July 2010) confirms the right-wing newspapers' delegitimizing campaign. *Il Giornale* even organised a signatures campaign to persuade Fini to leave his office.

*La Repubblica*, by contrast, concentrates on the complaint made by Fini about *Il Giornale*, deploring the campaign against him in the centre-right newspapers:

*"After five days of silence, the Speaker of the Italian House of Commons has decided to give a mandate to his lawyer, Giulia Buongiorno, to sue il Giornale, the newspaper owned by the Berlusconi family, for the articles about the case of the property in Monaco... Fini speaks of a "smear campaign" against him".*<sup>35</sup>

In other words, different newspapers covered the case in different ways depending on their political affiliation. Indeed, while the centre-right newspapers spared no effort in attacking the then Speaker of the House of Commons, Fini, a center-right politician, he found an unlikely defender in *la Repubblica*, the most popular centre-left newspaper. This is a strange case of political parallelism. Indeed, *la Repubblica*, close to the centre-left, and above all notoriously averse to the policies of the Berlusconi government, has been described by many observers as having been Fini's main defender during the months that saw the former Speaker of the House of Commons involved in the Monte-

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<sup>35</sup> "Villa in Monte-Carlo, Fini sues il Giornale", *la Repubblica* 3 August 2010  
<http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2010/08/03/casa-di-Monte-Carlo-fini-querela-il-giornale.html>  
(Last access 23 November 2015)

Carlo scandal. At that time Fini appeared to have become one of the main antagonists of Silvio Berlusconi, raising the possibility of bringing down the centre-right government. It was enough to deserve the support of the best selling centre-left daily in Italy (*la Repubblica*), even if he was a prominent leader of the Italian right. This shows that the media's instrumentalization is not so much tied to ideological questions, but rather to the willingness to influence a power struggle, and media change their stances case-by-case based on the contingency of the moment.

With regard to *Corriere della Sera* and *La Stampa*, at first they kept a low profile, limiting themselves to providing an aseptic account of the incident the day after the scandal broke, without giving the story a prominent position, thus renouncing the opportunity to ride the wave of indignation that usually follows a similar scandal. Following this, however, they appear to have realized that the story had an important newsworthiness, and began to close the gap with *Libero* and *Il Giornale*. The tone, however, remained different from that of the centre-right newspapers, more oriented towards neutral presentation of the facts, rather than editorializing, and without taking a position in favour of either side, perhaps because the readership of these newspapers cannot easily be ascribed either to the centre-right or the centre-left. The story only arrived on the front pages of these papers when Fini's defence began with a letter to *Corriere della Sera* in which he explained his version of the events: "*Fini: my truth about the villa*" was the headline of *Corriere della Sera* on 9 August.

## 5. Conclusions

This analysis of the case suggests some preliminary conclusions. First of all, the influence that an "impure publisher" is able to exert on the public debate should be highlighted. It cannot be considered a coincidence that the *initiator* of the affair was Gian Marco Chiocci, a journalist with *Il Giornale*, the newspaper owned by the Berlusconi family, and that the scandal emerged during the most dramatic days of the clash between Berlusconi and Fini. Conducting an investigation, especially into a case of corruption, should be the main task of an investigative journalist, who by exercising his role as a watchdog looks into the story and highlights the (at least presumed) unlawful act, thus leading to the case being taken up by magistrates. Ettema and Glasser named investigative journalists as "custodians of public conscience": journalists are not guardians of some superior moral sense, they can't ratify who is good and who is evil, but they are "custodians of a moral engaged voice" (Ettema and Glasser, 1998, p.4). They call the attention to the breakdown of social systems and they call people to decide what is, and what is not, an outrage of sense of moral order. But in this case the *initiator* (*Il Giornale*) and the *facilitator* (*Libero*) have not limited

themselves in discovering facts, but they also pronounced the guilty verdict before the prosecutor did. Journalists exercise their role of watchdog when they try to supervise public officials behaviour, inspecting and denouncing misdemeanours with the aim of sharing a bipartisan sense of common good. In this case the term “hunting dog journalism” seems to be more suitable highlighting journalists hunting the enemy of their publishers. They carry out journalistic investigations without a universalistic sense of public good, but for a partisan attack that can damage the political career of an opponent. There is no doubt that the work conducted by Gian Marco Chiocci could be defined as an example of investigative journalism, involving time spent in the field, rather than a description of developments in the courts. But different ingredients of news coverage suggest that this was an “instrumental” use of investigative journalism.

The timing of the publication of the scandal suggests that there was a desire to weak a political enemy of the publisher of the newspaper behind the investigation. Furthermore, the type of journalistic sources utilised in the scandal construction denotes an unusual practice of investigative journalism. Fini’s misconduct was shared by something similar to a “Berlusconi’s private secrets and information services”, including also relationships with members of a foreign government. Berlusconi (through the fixer Lavitola) exploited his relationships to find damaging news about his political enemy, and publicized them through his media empire, which spectacularized the case to catch the attention on it, transforming a not illegal misdemeanour (the prosecutor didn’t find any evidence of illegal behaviour on the case) in a “mediated scandal”.

This case, in other words, is a clear example of “Italian style” investigative journalism, which is affected by two major factors: the first, as already seen, regards the influence exerted by impure publishing; the second is the clear expression of partisanship in the presentation of the news story. Indeed, regardless of the ownership question, the case of the villa in Monte-Carlo highlights a number of peculiarities present in the polarized pluralist model of journalism, as proposed by Hallin and Mancini (2004). This is characterized by a high degree of parallelism between media outlets and the factions present in the political arena, and a high level of partisanship in the way the news is presented, and above all, commentated on. But is not just an ideological matter. Partisanship dues not to a clear political affiliation of media outlets towards political factions, rather to current needs imposed by the political struggle, and it produces a process of instrumentalization of the story. In this specific case we are dealing with the political exploitation of a scandal, an event treated in a “spectacularized” manner, with the aim of damaging a political opponent. This is a level of partisanship that leads to the formation of two opposing camps, which face each other armed with commentaries and editorials, using the scandal of the villa in Monte-Carlo as a pretext. On one side there are the two main newspapers of the centre right, which have published the highest number of

articles. On the other is *la Repubblica*, the main newspaper of the centre left. In the middle are *Il Corriere della Sera* and *La Stampa*, which do not choose a side, and simply provide updates on developments, carrying interviews with both parties, and reporting on judicial activity in a balanced manner.

This is a partisanship that also responds to the logic of the market: the segmentation of readership in the Italian publishing market, as highlighted in the HACA and CACA reports on Italy, is primarily based on the political stance of the readership, and the newspapers attempt to reflect and nurture the positions of their respective audiences to encourage them remain customers. When the scandal emerged, its protagonist, Gianfranco Fini, was in the process of threatening to bring down the government, and terminating his alliance with Berlusconi, the publisher of the newspaper that dug up the story. It was necessary to delegitimize the figure of Fini, fanning the flames of outrage and disappointment among centre-right voters, which represent the readership of *Liberio* and *Il Giornale*. The readers of *la Repubblica*, by contrast, saw in Fini a good opportunity to bring down the Berlusconi government, so they were happy to read that the scandal was an invention of the right. In this case the partisanship takes on particular connotations and becomes instrumentalization: to attack a historic rival (Berlusconi), *la Repubblica* leapt to the defence of one of the major figures of the Italian right. This is a partisanship that also leads to a direct confrontation between newspapers, with *la Repubblica* attacking the centre-right newspapers for the methods used in conducting the investigation, and the centre-right newspapers accusing the others of a lacking coverage of the story due to political parallelism, thus admitting the partisanship of the system.

# **Infotainment and Current Affairs Television Programmes: From Petty Corruption to Grand Corruption**

(Roberto Mincigrucci, Anna Stanziano and Marco Mazzoni)

## **1. Introduction**

Through the analysis of the contents of four Italian newspapers (*Corriere della Sera*, *La Repubblica*, *Il Giornale*, *Il Sole 24 Ore*) it emerged that the level of coverage of corruption in Italy is among the highest in Europe. The findings of the research, however, demonstrate that in general reference to corruption in Italy almost exclusively involves “*grand corruption*” (Mancini *et al.*, 2015). Many researchers have tried to make a distinction between “*grand corruption*” and “*petty corruption*” in the literature (Lambsdorff 2007, Andvig, Fjeldstad 2000, Disch, Vigeland, Sundet 2009, Amundsen 1999): The former concerns major episodes of corruption, scandals of national importance involving leading exponents of the political landscape, or large companies and multinationals, but above all cases that involve substantial amounts of money in terms of bribes or benefits arising from unlawful conduct. *Petty corruption*, by contrast, regards cases of small-scale corruption, “street corruption” (Andvig, Fjeldstad 2000) that can take place in the daily experience of ordinary citizens. This involves lower and middle level public officials, such as a small bribe paid to a municipal police officer to avoid an administrative fine, or to a doctor to avoid long waiting lists, and is characterized by small amounts of money or the limited benefits obtained through the corrupt act.

The first results that emerge from the computer assisted content analysis (CACA) and the human assisted content analysis (HACA) on a sample of the above mentioned newspaper articles appear to suggest that corruption in Italy mainly concerns prominent politicians and major scandals, events that are unlikely to touch upon the direct experience of the common citizen. Does this mean that *petty corruption* does not exist in Italy? The corruption perceptions index, produced by Transparency International and Eurobarometer on the Italian context, demonstrates that corruption is a phenomenon that is apparent at every level. It should be remembered that the CACA and HACA analysis refer to a partial area of the coverage of corruption, limited to an analysis of the printed press. To verify the presence of *petty corruption* it was decided to broaden the research to

include the study of television. As will be made clear by the analysis, the Italian media do not entirely ignore *petty corruption*, but rather deal with it through the most popular medium, television, which is closer to the ordinary citizen. From the wide range of news television programmes in Italy, ranging from news broadcasts to political talk shows, we chose to analyze those programmes that play a role as a watchdog in investigating and denouncing corruption. In other words, we aimed to identify those broadcasts that, by denouncing illegal acts, could be attributed the role of *initiator* according to our typologies. In reality investigative journalism is not a very common practice in Italy (Papuzzi, 2010; Sidoti, 2003), as evidenced also by the Italian HACA analysis. When they touch upon corruption, the main Italian media often limit themselves to providing updates on judicial proceedings, and presenting documents provided by the prosecutor, rather than conducting true investigations. Among the few exceptions are two popular television programmes which are not news programmes rather entertainment, *Le Iene* and *Striscia la Notizia*, and a programme which focuses on the news reporting, and provides news that is usually associated with another means of communication, the quality press, on the small screen, *Report*. In other words, we have focused on the analysis of the coverage of corruption on the small screen, choosing two *infotainment* programmes, which present a hybrid of news and entertainment, and often prefer *soft news* to *hard news*, and produce content whose objective is to entertain and amuse, rather than provide a detailed reconstruction of events, and a programme that combines investigative reporting with *hard news*.

The way to tell stories, and also the way corruption is represented, differs profoundly between the two *infotainment* programmes and *Report*. As will be demonstrated by our data, *Le Iene* and *Striscia la Notizia* concentrate on “street level” corruption, cases of *petty corruption*, which can directly affect the ordinary citizen, while *Report* tackles issues much closer to those in the national newspapers, focusing on cases of *grand corruption*, albeit with a different narrative style, and going into each case in greater detail.

It is no coincidence that *petty corruption* is the prerogative of the *infotainment* programmes. Italian newspapers have a “educated” readership of middle and upper class readership, who is interested in reading and understanding political news, so it is plausible that if they were to devote time and resources to unmasking an episode of corruption it would require a striking example, an illicit exchange involving large sums of money, or which involves prominent political or national business figures, to attract such a reader’s attention. They can’t waste resources in reporting minor news that result irrelevant for the national public debate. On the contrary *Le Iene* and *Striscia la notizia* are produced by Mediaset, a commercial broadcaster addressing a mass audience that may be the victim of an episode of *petty corruption*. His market-oriented aim induces it to address to the mass of ordinary citizens. They usually take the side of the citizen, exposing and denouncing those

minor injustices and crimes that go unmentioned in the newspapers. Most of time the citizen has also a direct involvement in the investigative report, playing the role of the victim or of the whistleblower, denouncing the misdemeanour. For that this programmes occasionally refer to themselves as “counter-information”, offering different news from the mainstream media that are often close to political and economic power. But above all they adopt the typical discursive canons of show business, as they are entertainment programmes first and foremost, and their aim is to entertain, not inform. In other words they operate a “trivialization” of the representation of corruptive behaviours, which consists in simplifying the topic of corruption, presenting it through a satirical manner. The audience of *Report*, a programme produced by *Rai*, the public broadcaster, is by contrast much closer to the readership of newspapers, an “educated” public, which could have a direct interest in the areas where *grand corruption* occurs. Specifically, the TV channel that broadcasts *Report*, *Rai 3*, has a lower audience than *infotainment* programmes’ ones, more exactly a niche audience, interested in national politics, power relations and decision makers’ activities. The content analysis carried out on *Le Iene*, *Striscia la Notizia* and *Report* confirms the fact that in Italy *petty corruption* is not ignored or underestimated by the media, but is more simply a prerogative of commercial television. If the space reserved for this argument by newspapers is an almost residual space, in television *infotainment* programmes *petty corruption* enjoys substantial coverage, as we shall see in the following pages. In corruption stories, Italian newspapers tend to focus on national politicians most often, public administrators of large municipalities that are implicated in major scandals involving substantial sums of money. This is because the newspapers need to cover well-known personalities at the national level, and use them to attack a particular political party, to exploit the case for their own ends. Television *infotainment* programmes, by contrast, do not side with a specific political party, and have no need to exploit the case. They simply aim to present an entertaining spectacle, and therefore deal with the local administrator, the policeman or the unknown village mayor, who pocket limited sums of money. These are the characters that appear best suited to the logic of *infotainment* programmes.

## **2. The analysed programmes and the selection of stories**

The empirical part of the research is based on the content analysis of three television programmes, *Le Iene*, *Striscia la Notizia* and *Report*, between 2010 and 2015. The corpus of analysis was collected through the online archives of the three programmes, which unfortunately at the time of consultation did not contain all the episodes aired in the period under consideration. For this reason the present analysis is limited to those episodes available in their online archives. The stories that are of interest for the purposes of this research have been identified through the same 10 keywords

related to different forms of corruption that have been utilised also for CACA and HACA reports: corruption; bribe; kickback; solicitation; embezzlement; familism; clientelism; collusion; nepotism; favouritism<sup>36</sup>. Their relevance to the theme of corruption was established through the consultation of specialized dictionaries on the subject (e.g. Transparency 2009; OECD 2008). However we believed useful for a better completeness of the research to add a further 21 keywords that made it possible to encompass all areas where corruption is most likely: university; school; professor; police; municipal police; healthcare; hospital; doctor; public administration; competitive exam; tender; mayor; regional councillor; member of parliament; absenteeism; absentee; referee; betting; bureaucracy; scandal; inquiry<sup>37</sup>. The selected stories were analyzed using a codebook, indicating: 1. The arena in which the corruption case occurred (European, national, regional, provincial or municipal context); 2. The kind of actor, namely the position held by the individual involved in the scandal (e.g. mayor, doctor, municipal employee etc.); 3. The sector in which the illegal action occurred (university, sports, or law enforcement); 4. The type of corruption (bribery, embezzlement, abuse of power etc.), 5. Whether it can be classified as an episode of *petty corruption*. Finally, when possible, it was asked to the coders to indicate the amount of money involved. In total 275 episodes were identified, 107 for *Le Iene*, 93 for *Striscia la notizia* and 75 for *Report*.

**Table 1: Number of episodes by programme (2010-2015)**

	No.
<b>Le Iene</b>	107
<b>Striscia la notizia</b>	93
<b>Report<sup>38</sup></b>	75
<b>Total</b>	275

Looking at the three programmes in detail, *Le Iene* is an entertainment programme produced by Mediaset that is aired once or twice a week on *Italia 1* since 1997, originally in an afternoon slot, and more recently in prime time (after 9pm) or late evening (after 11pm). Between 2010 and 2015 there 2,877,079 viewers per episode. *Le Iene* is the Italian version of a Spanish format (*Caiga quien caiga*) and is a mixture between a variety show and an informative program, which aims to present current affairs issues with an ironic or irreverent style. The programme alternates between satirical sketches, interviews with personalities from the world of entertainment, and investigative

<sup>36</sup> In Italian the keywords were: *corruzione; tangente; mazzetta; concussione; peculato; familismo; clientelismo; collusione; nepotismo; favoritismo*.

<sup>37</sup> In Italian the extra keywords were *università; scuola; professore; polizia; vigili; sanità; ospedale; medico; pubblica amministrazione; concorso pubblico; appalto; sindaco; consigliere regionale; parlamentare; assenteismo; assenteisti; arbitro; scommesse; burocrazia; scandalo; inchiesta*.

<sup>38</sup> For the programme *Report* some features make up the entire episode of the program. Therefore we have not taken into account the duration of the episode, and a story that lasted an entire episode was counted as a single unit.

journalism. The presenters and most of the correspondents come from the world of cinema and show business, without a formal journalistic background. The programme is characterized by its easy-going and sometimes provocative style, which is employed for both entertainment and investigative reports.

*Striscia la notizia* is a programme produced by Mediaset that is aired from Monday to Saturday on *Canale 5* since 1988, in the time slot known as “peak time”, between the end of the news and prime time programming. *Striscia la notizia* has always been one of the most watched programmes on Italian television. During the period under review it registered an average of 5,594,600 viewers per episode, while in the early years of this decade it reached a peak of 9-10 million viewers per episode<sup>39</sup>. The programme began as a satirical news program, with the aim of making fun of “bloopers” on the Italian televisions in a comic and irreverent style, but progressively it has increasingly taken on the characteristics of a current affairs programme even if maintaining its satirical and entertainment style. Indeed, many investigations are conducted by “Gabibbo”, a big red puppet who ordinary citizens contact to denounce scams and injustices, performing the role of “avenger” for unprotected citizens. In addition to Gabibbo, various presenters and correspondents have alternated over the years, and as in the case of *Le Iene*, they mainly come from the world of entertainment, rather than that of journalism. Nevertheless, while not fully respecting the canons of journalism, *Striscia la notizia* has been awarded a number of journalism awards over the years (Papuzzi, 2010).

*Report* is a RAI current affairs programme hosted by Milena Gabanelli, broadcast on Sundays on RAI 3, and known for its investigative reporting. Between 2010 and 2015 it had an average audience of 2,507,877<sup>40</sup>. The principal characteristic of *Report* is that it is a small scale production employing just about ten people, most of who are free-lance reporters. The programme is considered a successful model in the field of investigative journalism. *Report* has been highly praised by audiences and critics from the start, to the extent that Aldo Grasso praised Gabanelli and her television program as representing a “fundamental genre for information,” which is “an increasingly neglected genre”: investigative reporting<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>39</sup> La Repubblica “*Striscia: Bonolis e Laurenti sono i nuovi mezzi busti (lit. Bonolis and Laurenti are the new talking heads)*” 10 March 2003. <http://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2003/03/10/striscia-bonolis-laurenti-sono-nuovi-mezzibusti.html> (Last consultation 9 February 2016).

<sup>40</sup> Audience figures for *Le Iene*, *Striscia la Notizia* and *Report*: our elaboration of *Auditel* data available at [www.davidemaggio.it](http://www.davidemaggio.it)

<sup>41</sup> Fonte Corriere della Sera “Ora e sempre Gabanelli (lit. Gabanelli now and forever)” 17 November 2010. <http://video.corriere.it/ora-sempre-gabanelli/0676d7a2-f25d-11df-a59d-00144f02aabc> (Last consulted 9 February 2016).

### 3. Coverage analysis of *Le Iene* and *Striscia la Notizia*

The coverage of corruption in the programmes *Le Iene* and *Striscia la Notizia* appears to be well defined, and confirms the hypothesis that the *infotainment* programmes mainly deal with *petty corruption*. It should be noted that we have not adhered to uniform criteria in the classification of corruption, as there is no clear classification which unambiguously defines which episodes are counted as *petty corruption* and which as *grand corruption*. For the purposes of this paper *petty corruption* has been considered as all unlawful conduct which involves sums of money which are not particularly significant, and episodes which involve low levels of the public administration, such as the administrators of small municipalities, low-ranking civil servants etc. that would be unlikely to find space in the pages of national newspapers.

**Table 2: Coverage of Petty/Grand Corruption by *Striscia la Notizia* and *Le Iene* (2010-2015)**

	No.	%
<b>Petty corruption</b>	164	82,0
<b>Grand corruption</b>	36	18,0
<b>Total</b>	200	100,0

As Table 2 shows, according to our classification, minor incidents of corruption are predominant in *infotainment* programmes. These programmes focus on *petty corruption* in 82% of cases, small offenses that closely affect ordinary citizens, such as municipal police who receive bribes from private companies to tamper with speed cameras, and impose unjust fines on motorists, or a school that collects bribes of €7000 to ensure that students pass their final exams. Table 2 shows that despite being ignored by newspapers, *petty corruption* is not alien to the Italian case, but is mainly dealt with by the commercial broadcaster.

A preliminary analysis of the types of crime dealt with in the episodes shows that greater attention is paid to offences typical of low-level bureaucracy, as presented in Table 3.

**Table 3: Main type of corruption cases by *Striscia la Notizia* and *Le Iene* (2010-2015)**

	No.	%
<b>Bribery</b>	50	25,0
<b>Absenteeism</b>	29	14,5
<b>Fraud</b>	24	12,0
<b>Extortion</b>	24	12,0
<b>Embezzlement</b>	23	11,5
<b>Abuse of power</b>	16	8,0
<b>Favouritism</b>	16	8,0
<b>Nepotism</b>	7	3,5
<b>Wasting public money</b>	3	1,5
<b>Vote trading</b>	3	1,5
<b>Tax Evasion</b>	3	1,5
<b>Unauthorized construction</b>	2	1,0
<b>Total</b>	200	100,0

The 25% of the analyzed stories deal with the payment of a bribe. The payment of a bribe is the crime of corruption par excellence, as demonstrated by the results of the HACA analysis, which sees this as the most common in almost all countries surveyed. The two investigated *infotainment* programmes mainly focus on small bribe, in most cases the bribe represents a payment for “small favours” granted by public employees or law enforcement officers, such as a bribe paid to a vehicle registration official to obtain a driving license without having passed the driving test, or €50 paid by patients to a doctor in the Campania region to skip the waiting list. But while bribery is the most commonly reported crime, absenteeism deserves a special mention, as it is a common focus of *infotainment* programmes. Programmes such as *Striscia la Notizia* and *Le Iene* often endeavour to track down public employees who punch the clock without actually going to their place of work, such as the employee of a local healthcare centre (ASL) in the Veneto region who, after clocking in, made his way to the bar, or the public servants in Apulia filmed shopping during working hours. As these examples show, *Striscia la Notizia* conducts a “crusade” against absenteeism in public offices, spectacularizing and sometimes trivializing it. In fact absenteeism is a petty crime that rarely media mainstream are interested to cover, but it often presents many grotesque aspects that make it attractive for popular media. *Infotainment* programmes, making use of their typical narrative techniques such as hidden cameras and interviews with the alleged perpetrators when they are caught red handed, increase the emotional impact of the story, getting involved their audience. The coverage of corruption in public administration made by *infotainment* programmes needs a more in depth analysis. The people’s trust in Italian public officials is very low, as confirmed by Special

Eurobarometer n°297/2013<sup>42</sup>. According to Eurobarometer, 55% of Italians considers public servants prone to corruption, but above all there is a general dissatisfaction with their way of working. The *Infotainment* programmes take advantage of this dissatisfaction to increase their audience, proving a large coverage of public administration's dysfunctions. The crusade against the workshy, evidenced by the fact that 14% of stories are dedicated to this theme, is an hallmark of these programmes, which often present themselves as the defenders of the common citizen, watchdogs that denounce the small offences which other areas of the media ignore, nurturing a sense of indignation towards a category that is often represented as privileged, as they are guaranteed a permanent position, paid with public funds, and are highly unlikely to be sanctioned for misconduct. The *infotainment* programmes' large interest in civil servants is also confirmed by the 11.5% of cases that involve embezzlement. As with absenteeism, the two programmes denounce those employees who interpret public office as a personal arrangement, with the difference being that instead of taking time from the public administration, they pocket government resources destined for the public benefit. An example of this is the municipal police commander of a small town in Abruzzo who bought expensive designer shoes for himself and his colleagues with public funds, or the curious case of the Ministry of Justice which organised a recruitment drive to attract professional footballers, in the hope of hiring footballers in the penitentiary police force to play for Astrea Calcio, which plays in the amateur league run by the same law enforcement agency.

The cases presented in Table 3 do not exclusively involve *petty corruption*. Although they pay most attention to minor civil servants and "street level" corruption, *Le Iene* and *Striscia la Notizia* do not completely ignore the large scale corruption scandals that are extensively discussed on the national television news or in the newspapers, such as the cases involving the Calciopoli football scandal, or the affair that forced the resignation of the Mayor of Rome, Ignazio Marino.

Table 4 shows that the favourite targets of *Le Iene* and *Striscia la Notizia* are not officials responsible for tenders, or political leaders known to the general public, but predominantly minor civil servants, or local administrators who come to the fore for alleged wrongdoing.

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<sup>42</sup> A Eurobarometer report based on citizens' responses to a questionnaire on all aspects of corruption.

**Table 4: Actors involved in corruption cases by *Striscia la Notizia* and *Le Iene* (2010-2015)**

	No.	%
<b>Mayor/ town councillors</b>	34	17,0
<b>Doctor</b>	28	14,0
<b>Executive/official /civil servant</b>	20	10,0
<b>Entrepreneur</b>	19	9,5
<b>Minister / national politician</b>	18	9,0
<b>Municipal police</b>	14	7,0
<b>Municipal employee</b>	13	6,5
<b>Regional politician</b>	11	5,5
<b>Healthcare executive/officer/employee</b>	10	5,0
<b>Law enforcement</b>	6	3,0
<b>University vice-chancellor</b>	5	2,5
<b>University executive/officer/employee</b>	5	2,5
<b>University professor</b>	4	2,0
<b>Citizen voter</b>	3	1,5
<b>Transport company employee</b>	3	1,5
<b>Not specified</b>	2	1,0
<b>Referee designator</b>	2	1,0
<b>Semi-state company</b>	1	0,5
<b>Condominium administrator</b>	1	0,5
<b>Camorra (organised crime)</b>	1	0,5
<b>Total</b>	<i>200</i>	<i>100,0</i>

As evidenced by Table 4, most of the analyzed stories (17%) focus on mayors or city councillors, and if the category of municipal employees (6.5%) is added, it is clear that corruption, for *infotainment* programmes, predominantly takes place in the institution closest to the citizen, the municipality. Local mayors are the protagonists of the most bizarre and sometimes the most spectacularized stories, such as the mayor of a small Sicilian town that employed a person assigned to community service as a skipper on his yacht. In the *infotainment* programmes, Mayors are represented as the county sheriff, an individual above the law, free to drive not following the traffic law and aware that the police will not intervene, or to put up unregulated election posters without the risk of incurring sanctions.

While the category of ministers and national politicians (party leaders and parliamentarians) appears among the top positions, with 9% of the cases reported, analyzing Table 4 as a whole it can be said that they represent a rather isolated category, as all the other entries on the list refer to categories of civil servants or politicians associated with the lower levels of the public service, those potentially involved in *petty corruption*. The second category of actors most cited is that of doctors (14% of cases), or health sector employees (5%), who are guilty of receiving bribes for

small favours such as the issuing a certificate or the use of public healthcare facilities to perform private examinations. The municipal police is another category particularly targeted by *infotainment* programmes. In this case the range of crimes are among the most varied, from turning a blind eye to unauthorized parking, to tampering with speed cameras and imposing unjust penalties on motorists. Table 5 shows the sectors in which corruption cases occur.

**Table 5: Involved sectors in corruption cases by *Striscia la Notizia* and *Le Iene* (2010-2015)**

	No.	%
<b>Municipal administration</b>	45	22,5
<b>Healthcare</b>	40	20,0
<b>Local police</b>	26	13,0
<b>University</b>	15	7,5
<b>Politics/political parties</b>	15	7,5
<b>State administration</b>	14	7,0
<b>Entertainment</b>	9	4,5
<b>Regional administration</b>	8	4,0
<b>Motor Vehicles / Transportation</b>	8	4,0
<b>Work</b>	5	2,5
<b>Private</b>	4	2,0
<b>Other</b>	3	1,5
<b>Sport</b>	3	1,5
<b>Agriculture</b>	2	1,0
<b>Justice</b>	2	1,0
<b>Corruption in general</b>	1	0,5
<b>Total</b>	<i>200</i>	<i>100,0</i>

As can be seen from Table 5, the sectors most affected by corruption, according to the stories broadcast on *Le Iene* and *Striscia la Notizia* are, once again, municipal administrations, healthcare and the municipal police, which together exceed 50% of the cases analyzed. The examples are essentially those mentioned above, from the speed camera rigged by the municipal police, to prescriptions traded for bribes by doctors, to the bizarre behaviour of some small town mayors. From this table, however, it emerges that there is another area frequently involved in incidents of corruption, that of the academic world and universities (7,5%). This sector deserves special mention, as it is often associated with particular forms of corruption. While the classic bribe to pass an exam is still present, not to mention more scandalous cases involving sexual favours in exchange for results, one of the most common crimes associated with academic circles is that of favoritism / nepotism. In such cases universities are described as the “fiefdom” of a professor baron, who is capable of influencing the recruitment process and filling the department with friends and relatives.

Sport, by contrast, appears to be of little interest to the broadcasts examined. Despite the centrality of sports, particularly football, in the Italian way of life, *Le Iene* and *Striscia la Notizia* appear to devote little attention to incidents of corruption in this sector. Two of the three stories listed in the table relate to some residual effects of the well-known Calciopoli scandal, which involved the most important football clubs in the Italy, while the third relates to the lack of transparency in the management of the finances of a sports betting company. This appears rather unusual, not only because the Italian sports landscape is full of corruption scandals, at both the professional and amateur levels (Poto, 2010), but mainly because the target audience of the *infotainment* programmes *Le Iene* and *Striscia la Notizia* is a less educated public, more inclined to *soft news* than *hard news*, and therefore potentially interested in news about the world of sport.

This data also proposes a dilemma that also emerges from the CACA and HACA analysis. In Italy sport appears to be extraneous to corruption cases, unlike other countries that often treat cases of corruption in sport. A striking example is the UK, where corruption in sport is one of the topics most often dealt with in tabloid newspapers. For many characteristics observed in this analysis, *infotainment* programmes can be associated with British tabloids, in terms of both the subjects covered and their target audience, and yet, with regard to sport, this is not the case. This leaves the door open to various interpretations, one of which could be that the average citizen sees sport as an element of relaxation and entertainment, and might not greet a story that threatens to undermine and discredit such a popular pastime. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, these *infotainment* programmes tend to represent themselves as champions of the common people, denouncing the dishonesty and misconduct of the privileged classes. An attack on sports personalities, with whom ordinary citizens often identify themselves, risks a cold reception from the target audience.

The political category refers to activity involving political parties, and is not associated with the institutions of government. An example would be the treasurer of a party who commits a crime of embezzlement by putting aside electoral reimbursements for private ends, but as shown in the table this is a marginal topic.

**Table 6: Main event arena by *Striscia la Notizia* and *Le Iene* (2010-2015)**

	No.	%
<b>Municipal</b>	96	48,0
<b>Regional</b>	52	26,0
<b>National</b>	31	15,5
<b>Provincial</b>	17	8,5
<b>European</b>	4	2,0
<b>Total</b>	200	100,0

Table 6 essentially confirms what was clear from the analysis of the sectors and actors featured in stories on corruption, namely that the majority of cases examined by the *infotainment* programmes take place at the municipal level, while corruption at the national level, and in particular at the European level, appears to be a less attractive proposition for the two programmes. As for the physical location where the reported crimes (and not the arena or the level) take place, the most often referenced municipality is Rome, both for the high number of stories dedicated to events involving the former mayor Ignazio Marino<sup>43</sup>, and because it is the city in which a multitude of offices and public bodies are based. Beyond Rome many stories are devoted to small towns such as Orte, in the province of Viterbo, Agropoli in the province of Salerno, Scaletta Zanclea in the province of Messina, and in small provincial towns such as Latina, Padua and Barletta. These towns are featured in one or two stories each, unlike Rome, which has appeared as many as 45 times, but when taken together they clearly confirm that the corruption dealt with by *infotainment* programmes occurs in what is referred to as provincial Italy. Rome is the setting for 22.5% of the analyzed services, Napoli 6.5% and Milan 6%, while the provincial towns put together account for 28.5% of cases.

#### **4. Coverage analysis of *Report***

As mentioned in the introduction, 75 episodes of *Report* have been analysed between 2010 and 2015. Sometimes the entire edition has been dedicated to the topic of corruption, such the Expo<sup>44</sup> and Mose enquiries<sup>45</sup>, the Consip tenders<sup>46</sup>, the Formigoni case<sup>47</sup> at the Lombardy Regional

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<sup>43</sup> Ignazio Marino, Mayor of Rome, was accused of failing to pay fines.

<sup>44</sup> The Expo case refers to an exchange of bribes for contracts for the construction of the area that would house the 2015 Universal Exhibition in Milan.

<sup>45</sup> The Mose case refers to a bribery scandal involving contracts for the construction of a dam in Venice.

<sup>46</sup> The Consip case (Central Purchasing Body of the Italian Public Administration) refers to a series of rigged tenders for the supply of services in the public administration.

<sup>47</sup> The Formigoni case refers to a bribery scandal involving contracts in the Lombardy Regional Government.

Government, and Finmeccanica<sup>48</sup>, demonstrating the attention devoted by the programme to corruption.

**Table 7: Coverage of Petty/Grand Corruption by Report (2010 – 2015)**

	No.	%
<b>Petty corruption</b>	8	10,7
<b>Grand corruption</b>	67	89,3
<b>Total</b>	75	100,0

This table demonstrates more than any other that *Report*, compared with *infotainment* programmes, has a completely different approach towards corruption. In programmes such as *Le Iene* and *Striscia la Notizia* the coverage is focused on *petty corruption*, cases that directly concern and involve citizens. *Report*, by contrast, does not focus on the average Italian, but attempts to delve into the backstory and shadows of the great national scandals that involve *grand corruption*. This confirms the similarity between the public broadcaster’s coverage of corruption and newspaper’s ones.

**Table 8: Main type of corruption cases by Report (2010-2015)**

	No.	%
<b>Bribery</b>	38	50,7
<b>Favouritism</b>	10	13,3
<b>Embezzlement</b>	9	12,0
<b>Abuse of power</b>	5	6,7
<b>Corruption in general</b>	4	5,3
<b>Absenteeism</b>	4	5,3
<b>Mafia</b>	2	2,7
<b>Illegal financing</b>	2	2,7
<b>Nepotism</b>	1	1,3
<b>Total</b>	75	100,0

Table 8 reveals that 50% of the corruption cases analyzed concern the exchange of bribes, followed, albeit at a considerable distance, by favouritism and embezzlement. These data confirm that the most common crime in Italy, as also seen in the CACA and HACA analysis, covers the exchange of bribes. Indeed, these are the most common crimes in all television coverage of corruption. However, while bribery is a mainstay, the crimes that follow differ. In corruption cases dealt with by *Report*, the crimes that emerge are embezzlement, abuse of power, and illegal financing, crimes commonly associated with *grand corruption*, in cases of national importance, which do not concern the individual citizen involved in a case against corruption.

<sup>48</sup> The Finmeccanica case refers to an exchange of bribes for the supply of helicopters to the Government of India.

Having established that the majority of the cases featured on *Report* involve *grand corruption*, instances of corruption of national importance, it is interesting to observe which actors are involved in these cases.

**Table 9: Actors involved in corruption cases by *Report* (2010-2015)**

	No.	%
<b>Mayor/ town councillors</b>	16	21,3
<b>Minister / national politician</b>	12	16,0
<b>Regional executive/officer/employee</b>	10	13,3
<b>State official / civil servant</b>	10	13,3
<b>Entrepreneur</b>	7	9,3
<b>Doctor</b>	7	9,3
<b>Healthcare executive/officer/employee</b>	3	4,0
<b>Bank manager</b>	2	2,7
<b>Provincial official</b>	2	2,7
<b>Political party</b>	2	2,7
<b>RAI management</b>	1	1,3
<b>Corruption in general</b>	1	1,3
<b>Professor</b>	1	1,3
<b>Judge</b>	1	1,3
<b>Total</b>	75	100,0

Table 9 shows that, even if *Report* focuses on cases of *grand corruption*, the principal actor involved in the corruption case, in 21% of cases, is a mayor or municipal councillor, both local actors who might not immediately be associated with cases of *grand corruption*. This figure, however, only contrasts with the data analyzed previously in a superficial manner. Indeed, of 16 cases analyzed, 6 relate to the Mafia Capitale investigation, with the involvement of the former Mayor of Rome Alemanno, while others involve the Mose investigation, the scandal of mafia infiltration in the town of Verona, all cases of national importance that involve significant amounts of money.

The previous table also confirms the results of *Special Eurobarometer n. 397/2013*, in which, when asked “Which categories of people do you believe are most easily corruptible?”, almost 70% of Italians indicated politicians, political parties and public servants. Therefore, the main actors involved in cases of corruption presented in the investigations conducted by *Report* reflect the opinion of the citizenship. Corruption, or at least that defined as *grand corruption*, characterizes power structures at all levels, from the local mayor to the national politician.

Another result that emerges from our analysis concerns the sector in which the case of corruption takes place.

**Table 10: Involved sectors in corruption cases by *Report* (2010-2015)**

	No.	%
<b>Municipal administration</b>	20	26,7
<b>State administration</b>	17	22,7
<b>Healthcare</b>	16	21,3
<b>Regional administration</b>	9	12,0
<b>Politics</b>	3	4,0
<b>University</b>	3	4,0
<b>Banking</b>	2	2,7
<b>Agriculture</b>	1	1,3
<b>Entertainment</b>	1	1,3
<b>The environment</b>	1	1,3
<b>Industry</b>	1	1,3
<b>Provincial administration</b>	1	1,3
<b>Total</b>	75	100,0

Table 10 confirms the previous table regarding the position of the corrupt, and how the actors involved in corruption cases are associated with the world of politics and the public administration. The areas in which corruption cases are most common are the public administration at all levels, health and politics. Also in this case, the presence of the municipal administration, with 26% of cases, is due to cases such as Mafia capital and the Mose investigation, cases in which the corruption takes place at the municipal level, but involves actors of national standing.

Therefore, while the results obtained from the analysis of the position of the main actor involved in a corruption case, and the sector in which the incident of corruption occurred, are very similar to those obtained from the analysis of *infotainment* programmes, with the municipal administration and mayors in first place in both cases, the real difference lies in the episodes of corruption involved. *Striscia la Notizia* and *Le Iene* deal with cases of *petty corruption* involving municipal administrators, almost always from provincial towns, who take advantage of their position to obtain favours, avoid paying fines, and make use of municipal funds for private purposes. *Report*, by contrast, also deals with cases involving municipal administrators, but in this case they are large municipalities and nationally known names (Alemanno, Tosi, De Luca, Formigoni).

**Table 11: Main event arena by *Report* (2010-2015)**

	No.	%
<b>Municipal</b>	36	48,0
<b>National</b>	26	34,7
<b>Regional</b>	12	16,0
<b>Provincial</b>	1	1,3
<b>Total</b>	75	100,0

Table 11 refers to the arena in which the act of corruption takes place, and is a consequence of the previous two tables. The prevalence of corruption at the municipal level, with regard to the actor and the sector, is also confirmed with regard to the arena. Almost 50% of corruption cases investigated by *Report* took place at the municipal level, which might lead one to think of *petty corruption*. In reality, as stated above, these are cases of local corruption that have national relevance, both because they involve politicians known at the national level, and because they involving an exchange of large sums of money. This once again confirms the CACA and HACA analysis, according to which corruption in Italy is firmly rooted in local institutions, which the broadsheets and broadcasts such as *Report* help to transform into national events (Mazzoni *et al.*, 2016). Some examples may help clarify this table. The Mafia Capitale case took place in Rome, involving municipal administrators and underworld figures operating in the capital, but given the amounts of money involved, as revealed during the investigations, and the national profile that the case has had, it is impossible to classify it as a case of *petty corruption*. Another example is the case of the G8, which was moved from La Maddalena to L'Aquila. The corruption took place at the municipal level, but the players involved, civil protection officials, operate at the national level, and moreover the G8 is an event of international importance, involving the highest political offices in the country.

## 5. Final remarks

In contrast to the results that emerged from the analysis of coverage in Italian newspapers, in which the handling of corruption was largely limited to judicial investigations, Italian television programmes present several examples of investigative journalism, with teams that discover illegal conduct and bring it to public attention, performing the role of *initiator* according to our interpretive typologies. However the television system does not conduct journalistic investigations in the same way. The main difference occurs between *Rai*, the public broadcaster and *Mediaset*, the commercial one. They address to different type of audience, to a more educated one the former and to a mass audience the latter, and consequently their programmes manifest different narrative styles. The role of *watchdog* assumes two distinct forms. On the one hand there is *Report*, an in depth broadcast, managed by accredited journalists, which features the same themes discussed in the main national newspapers such as grand corruption. On the other hand there are *Le Iene* and *Striscia la Notizia*, two *infotainment* programmes, which attract their target audience by alternating light entertainment and *soft news* involving authentic journalistic investigations, with the aim of informing the public about the vices of the powerful and the injustice in the Italian public administration. As a result,

very different narratives of the phenomenon of corruption emerge. *Report* focuses on major national scandals, or local scandals with national echoes, which have as their protagonists the elite and the ruling classes, while the *infotainment* programmes concentrate on the local sphere, small provincial municipalities and low-level politicians and public servants, in other words situations in which it is possible to empathize with the common citizen. This is therefore a situation that involves the “segmentation of the media market”, a phenomenon that strongly characterizes the Italian news market, with regard to both the national newspapers and *infotainment* programmes. However, while newspapers are often differentiated in terms of political polarization, and susceptible to political partisanship, as their readership has a well-defined political orientation, television programmes have a different market segmentation: some programmes, such as *Report*, are oriented toward a more “educated” public, which is interested in *hard news*, and is probably the same segment that reads the quality press, with a direct interest in the medium to high levels of public administration. Other programmes, such as *Le Iene* and *Striscia la Notizia*, cater to an audience less interested in national political affairs, which sees television as a source of relaxation and entertainment, but at the same time is very interested in any corruption that takes place in the institutions closest to them, at the small public office they have probably had to deal with on more than one occasion. This type of segmentation is typical of English speaking countries, in which the publishing market is divided between *quality* newspapers and magazines and *tabloids*. In Italy such *tabloids* are almost non-existent, so it is plausible that their function is performed by the *infotainment* programmes profiled in this research. In the English speaking world *petty corruption* is a prerogative of *tabloid* newspapers, for the same reasons that *petty corruption* is a mainstay of *infotainment* programmes in Italy, and presented in a narrative style more agreeable to the common citizen.

Some scholars (Bellu 2005, Ettema and Glasser 1998) assert that satire and irony are powerful artifices to capture the attention of a not attentive audience. Someone interested more in entertainment than in current affairs and not well informed about the political debate may have difficulties in recognising the seriousness of an illegal act and in manifesting indignation about it. By means of irony journalists can affect the common citizen, elevating the illegal or even the unethical to the outrageous. “Journalists may turn to a rhetoric of irony that reveals the misconduct to be not only technically wrong but terribly wrong: a true moral outrage” (Ettema and Glasser 1998, p.87). Therefore *infotainment* programmes have the merit of spreading the debate about corruption, reaching also citizens not easily reachable. But it provokes also negative consequence. The overusing of irony and satirical elements may produce a trivialisation process that weakens the seriousness of corruption debate. On the one hand an extreme simplification of the phenomenon may degenerate into cynicism, spreading the common understanding that every aspect of public life

is corrupt and corruption does not deserve indignation. On the other hand the trivialisation causes a minimization of problems. Corruption is downgraded as Italian bad habit, it is something to joke around with. All this aspects may produce habit and inactivity towards corruptive behaviours which prevent the spread of public opinion's shared indignation. In other words it facilitates the consolidation of systemic corruption.

# **“Agente Betulla”: a case of secret agreement between a journalist and the Italian secret services**

(Matteo Gerli)

## **1. Introduction**

According to a very formal interpretation of their role, government intelligence agencies are responsible for the protection of their country’s interests, contributing, along with other security bodies, to the defence and neutralization of both internal and external security challenges (Giannuli, 2012). Essentially, their “crucial” functions consist, on the one hand, of collecting facts and data (for example, through actions of shadowing and spying) and, on the other hand, of producing and disseminating information likely to foster specific interests, which may also involve (when it is considered appropriate to the aim) the manipulation of reality such that the “relevant actors” (politicians, members of cabinet, decision makers, and criminal organizations as well as ordinary citizens) do what “they are supposed to do”.

Two important questions arise at this stage: who is defining which interests are worthy of protection? And to what extent would the manipulation of reality be considered reasonable in enhancing national security? Clearly, in the current society, security agencies represent an essential component in the protection of citizens and the preservation of democracy (particularly against the risk of terrorist attacks). But, likewise, if they do not use their substantial power properly (namely, if their members are not loyal to the state to which they belong), they may turn their role into an instrument of prevarication, able to influence the politics of a country as much as they wish.

Referring to the recent history of Italy, the development of the national security agency<sup>49</sup> was marked by several cases of misuse (or abuse) of power, which, all together, have contributed to casting a shadow over its effective functioning (also explaining the many reforms enacted to

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<sup>49</sup> The Italian intelligence (or security) agency has taken various appellations throughout its history. For this reason, in this brief introduction we preferred to use a “generic” name for it. Afterwards, during the investigation of our case, we will refer specifically to the SISMI (Military Intelligence and Security Service), which was the equivalent of the SISDE (Intelligence and Democratic Security Service) on the military side at that time. Basically, the first one was in charge of foreign affairs, while the second one was responsible for domestic affairs. In 2007, they were replaced by the AISE (External Intelligence and Security Agency) and the AISI (Internal Information and Security Agency), respectively.

increase its effectiveness and bring it more fully under civilian control, the last of which was in 2007). As a matter of fact, any dramatic event that occurred in the second half of the 20th Century—from the “Piazza Fontana bombing” (1969) to the “Ustica plane crash” (1980), to Prime Minister Aldo Moro’s kidnapping (1978), just to mention some of the most relevant ones—are suspicious and thought possibly have some machination of the national security agency behind them<sup>50</sup>.

In confirming this negative trend made of deliberate omissions, failures, secret agreements, we should not forget that, during the same period, many of the Army’s senior leaders were involved in attempts (luckily failed) of conspiracy against the State, the last of which was the so called “loggia massonica P2”, a subversive organization disbanded by the Italian Parliament in 1982.

Journalism, especially investigative journalism, may constitute a real “antidote” against the possibility of the criminal degeneration of a state apparatus (in this specific case, the degeneration of an intelligence agency). “Good journalism” can (and must) help bring to light the real facts in the interest of readers, public opinion and, thus, the regular functioning of the political system. Conversely, real “informational sabotage” can occur when state apparatuses are out of control and journalists pursue the same objective, that is to say, when a professional journalist puts his/her reputation and reliability (and those of the newspaper for which he/she works) to the service of a falsified communication whose sole aim is to poison public information. This is what we discuss in detail in the next few pages through an analysis of a recent case of “secret agreement” between the journalistic sector and the SISMI (the Italian Military Intelligence and Security Service).

## **2. Who is the “agente Betulla”?**

Before addressing the substance of the events mentioned above, we should say a few words about the figure who, more than anyone else, can be considered our “main character”: the journalist Renato Farina (also known as “Betulla”). Indeed, through the analysis of his “cursus honorum”, we believe it may be possible to better assess the specific conditions that allowed what, in the eyes of several observers (mainly, but not exclusively, journalists), seemed to be secretive “recruitment” by the SISMI (see footnote n. 1). To make this assessment, we take advantage of a book that Farina himself published in 2008 with the declared purpose of telling his own version of the events.

To begin, he is considered a well-known journalist, if not to the general public, at least in some important circles (mostly linked to the Catholic right wing of the Italian political system). He is a person, in other words, who has the right acquaintances and friends (which he does not hide) from

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<sup>50</sup> For more details, see De Lutiis (2010).

whom he is able to draw upon the necessary resources to pursue his specific aims, which are not always strictly related to what is commonly associated with the profession of journalism.

His career begins soon after his university studies in philosophy, first with the weekly *Solidarietà* and then with the weekly *Il Sabato* from 1978 to its closure in 1993. Both papers had a declared Catholic leaning. He then became deputy editor for Vittorio Feltri at *il Giornale*, a centre-right newspaper owned by Berlusconi's family, and, for a short period, worked at *il Resto del Carlino*. From 2000 to 2006, the year he was suspended from the Italian Register of Journalists (before being expelled in 2007) because of his ties with the SISMI, he also held the same position of deputy director at *Libero*, another centre-right newspaper that Farina himself contributed to establishing with Feltri. On television, he was the writer and the host of *L'InFarinata*, a current affairs programme that aired in 2006 on *Rai Sat Extra* through the *Sky satellite platform*, and an advisor for *L'Infedele*, a similar TV programme broadcast on the private television station *LA7* in the same period. Finally, he was elected to the Italian Parliament in 2008 in the ranks of the "Popolo della Libertà", the centre-right party headed by the media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi. Referring to this, he declared that he owes everything to Berlusconi and Feltri, "who, after my expulsion from the Italian Ordine dei Giornalisti (Guild of Journalists), glimpsed this opportunity as a way to rehabilitate my professional honour in front of the journalists' eyes" (Farina, 2008, p. 8).

In his "memoirs", he expressly claimed to prefer a type of journalism that is not simply satisfied with writing opinions and reporting facts but aspires to intervene, if necessary, directly in political dynamics, even if it goes against professional ethics (pp. 37-40). This seems very much like an attempt to bring a guise of morality back to his "extra-journalistic" activities (in his story, there are many references to his "spiritual fathers", such as Karol Wojtyła, Giovanni Testori, and Luigi Giussani). Nevertheless, Farina, according to what he himself reports in the book, actualized this personal disposition on many occasions, thus expanding (or simply consolidating) his network of interpersonal relationships.

In the 80s, he was in Africa. First he travelled to Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast to describe the activities carried out by some Catholic NGOs, then to Ethiopia and Eritrea to cover the conflict between the two countries, and finally to Guinea Bissau following Pope Wojtyła on an apostolic visit. He moved from one position to another thanks to the channels that, from time to time, he accessed through his "friends in the Vatican", the *Caritas* organization and an unexpected Italian entrepreneur with some co-operational sites in the war zones. Regarding those travels, he described, with a hint of megalomania, that upon his return to Italy, he had been so struck by the poverty and adversity of the African people he decided to send a letter to monsignor Gianni Danzi, a personal

friend and secretary of the Pope. After a few days, the Pope himself decided to designate Cardinal Roger Etchegaray as a delegate to those lands.

In the 90s, he went to Serbia and Kosovo to follow the war as a reporter for *il Giornale*. However, his journalistic activities there were systematically intertwined with those of “diplomacy” that Farina claims to have maintained between the warring parties and the Italian Government. His excuse for this involvement remained the same: his desire not to be a mere spectator of facts. This “scheme”, however, was partially new because the objective was different—making a contribution to the end of the conflict—and the network that he needed to activate was also different.

In effect, among the important figures that Farina mentions appearing in his story besides the usual Berlusconi, are the names of Giulio Andreotti, the 41<sup>st</sup> Italian Prime Minister and one of the most important leaders of the Christian Democracy Party; Lamberto Dini, Luigi Manconi, and Riccardo Sessa, at that time, respectively, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the spokesman of Green party and the Italian ambassador to Belgrade; and Ljubira Ristic, at that time the president of the Jul party (the Yugoslav communist party) and political advisor of Slobodan Milošević of Serbia. In particular, from the latter, Farina claimed to have obtained two important “confidences” that he would promptly communicate to the proper authorities: the first one referred to the real risk of a terrorist attack in Europe by the Serbian fighters and the second one to the payment of some bribes in favour of some Italian politicians in the “Telecom Serbia affaire”.

Scrolling down these pages, it seems that journalism was a marginal activity for Farina. The conditions for his appointment by the Italian intelligence agency, however, materialized only in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century, following the attack on the Twin Towers (2001) when, at the behest of the then Senator and 8<sup>th</sup> President of the Italian Republic Francesco Cossiga, he published an article under the false name of Franco Mauri with which he supported the appointment of army generals Niccolò Pollari and Mario Mori as director of the SISMI and director of the SISDE, respectively. He describes the success of this initiative:

*Cossiga phoned me at dawn on Sunday. He was just leafing through the pages of Libero newspaper: “Triumph. Everyone is wondering who Franco Mauri is. Ministers and army generals are going crazy. Listen to me. Make an appointment with Minister Antonio Martino on behalf of Franco Mauri. Please meet him in person and don’t talk on the phone”. I asked Feltri if he would authorize me. He didn’t care about these things and he told me: “Meet him. We cannot lose Cossiga; you enjoy these situations, and one day, you will write a book about them”. Cossiga informed me that Pollari would phone me to have a cup of coffee with him before I met Martino (pp. 98-99).*

Farina claims to have met Pollari before (and after) his appointment to the upper levels of the SISMI—“he wanted me to be totally aware of the cause that I was going to support, that is, himself”

(p. 99)—and to have spent with him for hours and hours in complete intimacy, telling him his memories of the Serbian war. It was in this precise circumstance that the preconditions for a strong violation of the autonomy of journalism materialized<sup>51</sup>. As a matter of fact, the following story was developed from their frequent meetings, collaborations “in fighting against Islamic terrorism” and reciprocal benefits, not necessarily of economic, with the “journalist” Farina using *Libero* as a channel through which he spread the information he obtained from the SISMI—“in that period I often went to Rome. I wrote well-informed articles. Pollari devoted substantial time to me” (p. 134)—and the head of SISMI employed Farina as a sort of “undercover agent”. This is not the appropriate place to recall in detail all the cases mentioned in the book. However, just for the sake of thoroughness, we consider it is useful to emphasize that Farina himself was said to have been a key partner of the Italian intelligence agency in the liberation of Italian hostages, mostly by ensuring continuous contact with Imad El Atrache—formally the news editor at *Al Jazeera* but also a man with many relevant connections in the Arab world—and receiving in return some “attentions” that generally are not granted to ordinary civilians.

### 3. The case

News of the “Betulla case” officially broke in 2006 in the course of an inquiry by the Milan Prosecutor’s Office into the disappearance of Imam Abu Omar. In short, Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr, better known as Abu Omar, was an Egyptian citizen who lived in Italy at that time as a political refugee. He was kidnapped on 17 February 2003 by agents of the CIA with the cooperation of the SISMI—technically, these operations were termed *extraordinary rendition*—while he was going to the mosque, transferred first to the NATO military base in Aviano, then with an air carrier, to Ramstein in Germany and finally to Cairo in Egypt, where he was tortured and arrested on suspicion (no formal charges) of complicity with international Islamic terrorism<sup>52</sup>. The investigation began the day after the kidnapping when Nabila Ghali, Omar’s wife, reported his disappearance to the Italian authorities. In early July 2006, deputy prosecutors Armando Spataro and Enrico Pomarici demanded the indictments of approximately 35 people (mostly CIA and SISMI officials). Among them, Farina and his collaborator, Claudio Antonelli, were accused of abetting by having organized

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<sup>51</sup> Here it must be emphasized that a journalist is free to communicate with a member of an intelligence agency to collect information for his professional activities. Nevertheless, according to the Italian judicial system (see l. 801 of 24 October 1977), the intelligence agencies cannot have journalists on their own staff and, conversely, a journalist cannot practise his profession for an intelligence agency. Additionally, the Single Text of Journalists’ Duties (28 January 1993), which incorporates all the previous deontological charters, explicitly states that: “Journalists must refuse payments, reimbursements of expenses, donations, free holidays, gifts, facilities or stipends from private or public bodies that may affect their work and their autonomy or harm their credibility and professional dignity. Journalists do not take on assignments and responsibilities in conflict with the autonomous exercise of their profession [...]”.

<sup>52</sup> *il Post*, 20 September 2012. Available on: <http://www.ilpost.it/2012/09/20/la-storia-del-rapimento-di-abu-omar/>.

a fake journalistic interview with the goal of both collecting information on the progress of the investigation and tampering with the evidence. In particular, Farina wanted to make a fool of Spataro and Pomarici, but unfortunately for him, they had already wiretapped him while he was planning this “operation” with Pio Pompa, a high official of the SISMI who worked under the supervision of Pollari (Farina would be wiretapped again right after the fake interview while he was reporting all the information gathered to Pompa).

At first, it was the Abu Omar case, even before Farina’s, that “magnetized” the mass media’s attention, in part because it was the first time an operation from this CIA programme of secret transfers was at the core of a legal trial. Within a few days, however, Farina and Antonelli (to a lesser degree) become the objects of considerable interest from the majority of national newspapers. As a matter of fact, the more days passed, the more the publication of excerpts of the judicial process (largely transcripts of wiretappings) revealed clear elements of the pernicious relationship between the SISMI and the two journalists. To begin with, on 6 July 2006, *il Corriere della Sera* published a detailed article that described the existence of an “occult centre” pertaining to the SISMI and located in the neighbourhood of the police headquarters in Rome<sup>53</sup>. It was here that Pompa was responsible for a massive secret archive with thousands of files to be used against magistrates, journalists, politicians and businessmen deemed as “enemies”.

According to this article, Farina and Antonelli were the only journalists under indictment, but many other journalists seemed to have been “approached” by the SISMI’s agents to publish fake news. In particular, the wiretappings would prove that Farina had been employed under the false name of “Betulla” as a confidential informer for military intelligence and that he acted in concert with Pio Pompa when he went to the Milan Prosecutor’s office to “peek at” the ongoing inquiry.

On 7 July 2006, *il Corriere della Sera* published another article dealing with the disclosures addressing the two journalists of *Libero* in more detail, revealing the names of the first confirmed victims of the heterogeneous activities that the investigators classified as “misinformation”, “tampering with evidence”, “abusive surveillance” and “collecting of private information”<sup>54</sup>. Among the victims, Romano Prodi, at that time the President of the European Commission, and Stefano Dambrosio, the judge in charge of the investigation of the Omar case since 2004, are the two more prominent ones. In particular, to the detriment of Romano Prodi, Farina and Antonelli “wrapped” an article that had been suggested by the intelligence agency through which they

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<sup>53</sup> *il Corriere della Sera*, 6 July 2006. Available on: [http://www.corriere.it/Primo\\_Piano/Cronache/2006/07\\_Luglio/06/dossier.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/Primo_Piano/Cronache/2006/07_Luglio/06/dossier.shtml).

<sup>54</sup> *il Corriere della Sera*, 7 July 2006. Available on: [http://www.corriere.it/Primo\\_Piano/Cronache/2006/07\\_Luglio/07/sismi.shtml](http://www.corriere.it/Primo_Piano/Cronache/2006/07_Luglio/07/sismi.shtml).

explicitly indicated Prodi as the main politician responsible for the CIA operation<sup>55</sup>. Against Stefano Dambroso, they tried to support the idea that he was directly responsible for the organization of the kidnapping by both suggesting that their closer colleagues publish articles to corroborate that idea and providing false information (during the previously mentioned false interview) to the magistrates. This was a manipulation of reality with a double purpose: to clear the then-Prime Minister Berlusconi of any charges and to ensure the transfer of the inquiry from the Milan Prosecutor's Office to a "less relevant" one (any assessment on Dambroso would have obliged Spataro and Pomarici to give the inquiry to another office, probably that of Brescia).

To complicate Farina's position, according to what we read in *la Repubblica* on same day, there were also two receipts signed at the bottom by "Betulla"<sup>56</sup>. The amounts paid are not very large (2.500 and 5.000 euros), but according to the investigators, this would have proved the existence of a "structural" relationship between Farina and the SISMI.

On 8 July 2006, *Liberò* published a letter from Farina addressed to the editor Vittorio Feltri and to readers to explain and, mostly, to justify the facts that emerged from the inquiry<sup>57</sup>. Here, with a "friendly" style of language, Farina admitted "to have given a hand" to Italian Military Intelligence, transmitting and receiving some information as well as making all his network of contacts available. But, he specified that everything was always conducted following his principles and to preserve Italy and the Western world from terrorist attacks.

On the same wavelength, *Il Giornale* published an article entitled *Farina: "I soldi? Rimborsi per la lotta al terrorismo"* (lit. *Farina: "Money? Only reimbursements to fight against terrorism"*) in which, when commenting on the above-mentioned letter, the newspaper tried to explain how the money received by the journalist should be considered reimbursement for travel expenditures and not a reward for supposed spying activities<sup>58</sup>. Farina, therefore, claimed his role in the fight against terrorism, and he felt proud of his behaviour, even though he was aware of the possible legal consequences.

In the light of this, on 10 July 2006, the Lombardy Council of the Italian Ordine dei Giornalisti (Guild of Journalists) approved the opening of a disciplinary procedure against Farina and Antonelli: the first was charged of the manipulation and misuse of the journalistic profession, having put his job to the service of purposes other than the duties of independence and autonomy, loyalty and good faith, and thus violating the respect of the readers; the second was asked to explain why he did not

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<sup>55</sup> The article in question was published on *Liberò* on 9 June 2006. Available on: [http://d40105.e53.eundici.it/modello\\_artdos.php?id\\_artic=525&recordinizio=15](http://d40105.e53.eundici.it/modello_artdos.php?id_artic=525&recordinizio=15).

<sup>56</sup> *la Repubblica*, 7 July 2006. Available on: <http://www.repubblica.it/2006/07/sezioni/cronaca/arrestato-mancini/fabbrica-sismi/fabbrica-sismi.html>.

<sup>57</sup> *Liberò*, 8 July 2006.

<sup>58</sup> *Il Giornale*, 8 July 2006.

inform the senior management of *Libero* (in particular, the editor Vittorio Feltri and the managing director, Alessandro Sallusti) about the unusual activities carried out by and with his “supervisor”. About three months later, on 29 September 2006, Farina was suspended from his role for 12 months, whereas Antonelli was completely acquitted of all charges<sup>59</sup>.

Meanwhile, the legal case against them was proceeding such that on 16 February 2007, Farina decided to plead guilty to abetting, negotiating a penalty of 6 months in prison, which was later commuted to a pecuniary penalty of 6.800 euros. No penalty was imposed on Antonelli. A few months later, on 29 March 2007, Farina was expelled from the Italian Ordine dei Giornalisti (Guild of Journalists), following a request by the deputy General Prosecutor of the Italian Republic, Maria Antonietta Pezza, who declared that: “Farina’s behaviour remains incompatible with the ethical norms of the journalistic profession and has resulted in a serious disgrace to the entire group. And not only in connection with the Abu Omar case and the relations with Pio Pompa”<sup>60</sup>.

What happened in the following years was something paradoxical on which we consider it necessary to reflect before jumping to conclusions. First, at the end of 2009, 23 American citizens (mostly CIA agents) and 2 members of Italian Military Intelligence (the well-known Pio Pompa and Luciano Seno, an official with a marginal role in the Abu Omar case) were convicted of kidnapping. The names of Niccolò Pollari and Marco Mancini of the SISMI and that of Jeffrey Castelli, the then chief of the CIA office in Rome, were not among them because their actions were declared covered as state secrets for Pollari and Mancini and protected the diplomatic immunity for Castelli (such a “guarantee” did not apply to Robert Seldon Lady, the then chief of the same office in Milan, who was convicted along with his American colleagues). Then, on February 2013, all of these people were convicted for the same crime by the Milan Court of Appeal, which decided to reject any type of legal protection<sup>61</sup>. Finally, on February 2014, the Corte di Cassazione (the highest Italian Court of Judgement), recognizing a previous verdict of the Constitutional Court on the inability to take legal action against people covered by the state secret protection, acquitted all members of the SISMI involved in the case except Luciano Seno, who was sentenced to prison for two years and

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<sup>59</sup> For more details, see: [www.odg.mi.it/sites/default/files/farina-antonelli-delibera-28set06\\_1.rtf](http://www.odg.mi.it/sites/default/files/farina-antonelli-delibera-28set06_1.rtf).

<sup>60</sup> See: <http://www.odg.mi.it/node/30181>.

<sup>61</sup> *il Fatto Quotidiano*, 1 February 2013 and 12 February 2013. Available on: <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2013/02/01/abu-omar-in-appello-condannato-a-7-anni-ex-capo-cia-in-italia-jeff-castelli/486646/>.  
<http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2013/02/12/abu-omar-condannati-ex-vertici-sismi-10-anni-per-pollari-9-per-mancini/496479/>.

eight months<sup>62</sup>. None of the convicted US officials were extradited to Italy, and some of them have even been forgiven by the President of the Italian Republic<sup>63</sup>.

As for Renato Farina, he has continued to work for *Liberio* and *Il Giornale* newspapers as a columnist, although he was expelled from the journalists' guild. For this reason, on March 2010, the Lombardy Council of the Ordine dei Giornalisti (Guild of Journalists) approved a suspension of two months against editor Vittorio Feltri for having made use of Farina's work and thus violating professional decorum and dignity<sup>64</sup>. However, on 27 May 2011, the Corte di Cassazione annulled the disciplinary measure against Farina because he had unsubscribed from the journalists' register in 2007, before the Italian Guild declared his expulsion<sup>65</sup>. Following this decision (mainly based on a legal technicality), the Lombardy Council of the Guild was forced first to dismiss the disciplinary action against Feltri (on 5 July 2012), who had meanwhile impugned the previous measure, and then to readmit Farina into the register of journalists on 3 September 2014<sup>66</sup>.

This decision triggered the protests by many journalists<sup>67</sup>. Carlo Bonini, a reporter for *la Repubblica*, resigned from the National Council of the Italian Ordine dei Giornalisti (Guild of Journalists) with the following words:

*The memory of this country is short. Fleeting, I would say. That of its journalists, mostly iridescent, variable to the conveniences. And then, for the benefit of the forgetful, I will report literally what this National Council declared on 29 March 2007, the day when Renato Farina was expelled by the Order with 68 votes in favour, 5 abstentions, 2 against and 4 blank cards. The Appeal Board wrote: "Farina's behaviour is incompatible with all the ethical norms of the journalistic profession and has resulted in a serious disgrace to the entire group. And not only in connection with the Abu Omar case and his relations with Pio Pompa. It is Farina who, in his defence, revealed and claimed a role in negotiations with Milošević, a role that official members of the government deny he ever had. It is Farina who referred to his relationship with a secret US Service (a parallel to the CIA under the orders of Condoleezza Rice). It is Farina who claimed to the magistrates that he received approximately 30 thousand euros from the Italian intelligence agency".*

*Seven years were enough for this Guild to turn night into day. The shame and stigma is in forgiveness and resurrection. [...] Renato Farina, "alias Betulla", had among his espionage "targets" even journalistic work that the undersigned and Giuseppe D'Avanzo, who cannot talk any longer because a heart attack took him too soon on the morning on 30 July 2011, were*

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<sup>62</sup> *Il Giornale*, 25 February 2014. Available on: <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/interni/e-stato-eroe-lotta-alle-br-oggi-lunico-condannato-caso-abu-996152.html>.

<sup>63</sup> See: [http://www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/articoli/Seldon-Lady-e-Madero-ecco-chi-sono-gli-uomini-CIA-graziati-da-Mattarella-033a56e9-cf8e-4aaf-98c4-8fd56a02ccb1.html?refresh\\_ce](http://www.rainews.it/dl/rainews/articoli/Seldon-Lady-e-Madero-ecco-chi-sono-gli-uomini-CIA-graziati-da-Mattarella-033a56e9-cf8e-4aaf-98c4-8fd56a02ccb1.html?refresh_ce).

<sup>64</sup> See: <http://www.odg.mi.it/procedimenti-disciplinari/vittorio-feltri-professionista-sospensione-di-2-mesi-violazione-artt-2-e-4>.

<sup>65</sup> *Il Giornale*, 1 July, 2011. Available on: <http://www.ilgiornale.it/news/adesso-cassazione-d-ragione-farina-errato-radiarlo.html>.

<sup>66</sup> *L'Huffington Post*, 3 September 2014. Available on: [http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2014/09/03/farina-ordine-giornalisti\\_n\\_5757896.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.it/2014/09/03/farina-ordine-giornalisti_n_5757896.html).

<sup>67</sup> *la Repubblica*, 10 October 2014. Available on: [http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2014/10/09/news/bonini\\_farina\\_ordine\\_dei\\_giornalisti-97689638/?ref=search](http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2014/10/09/news/bonini_farina_ordine_dei_giornalisti-97689638/?ref=search).

*carrying out for “Repubblica”. [...] Well, the rehabilitation of Betulla into the Order insults not only the memory of Giuseppe D’Avanzo but also what he gave to journalism. And the silence is a connivance. I am saying to those who, in this Council, with yet another cynical change of opinion, were seeking refuge in the comforting thought that my resignation is only for “personal matters”<sup>68</sup>.*

To complete this “typically Italian” spy story, on 22 June 2015, during the *Tgcom24* Television programme, Niccolò Pollari laconically declared that Betulla is not Renato Farina<sup>69</sup>. As in a game of mirrors, the truth seems to be constantly tripping over into lies and vice versa.

#### **4. Conclusions**

What emerges from our analysis of the “Betulla case” is that intelligence agencies may take a potentially subversive stance serving hidden powers rather than the interests that are expressed by the executives of those same agencies. This phenomenon, as we mentioned in the introduction, is not at all unusual in the recent history of the Italian Republic, even though the use of the state secret protection has often prevented the unveiling of the truth.

In our specific case, Italian Military Intelligence (the SISMI) was successful in penetrating the news system thanks to the availability of a well-known journalist who acted for several years as an “undercover agent”, collecting information, spying on people’s movements (work), trying to tamper with judicial evidence and publishing news articles against every principle of journalistic ethics. This was a very dangerous activity that, in spite of Farina’s “good intentions”, could have resulted in serious threats to the democratic life of the country if the magistrates had not discovered what was happening behind the scenes.

All of this is even more astonishing if one considers that at that time, Renato Farina wasn’t a young journalist (professionally speaking), willing to do anything he was asked for quick career advancement, but a deputy editor of a national newspaper that had deep bonds with the right-centre circle. As a matter of fact, it is really thanks to his “complicity” in the political environment that Farina first became “Betulla” and later, after he pleaded guilty, gained strong political protection through his designation as a member of the Chamber of Deputies.

With regard to the different roles that a journalist can play in a case of corruption, Farina’s is surely a case of an “actively corrupt” journalist. Indeed, despite the fact that the judiciary convicted him of abetting (in legal terms, a crime other than corruption), in practice, he betrayed the bond of

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<sup>68</sup> See: <http://www.lapresse.it/scheda-editoria-la-lettera-di-dimissioni-di-bonini-allodg.html>.

<sup>69</sup> *il Fatto Quotidiano*, 23 Jun 2015. Available on: <http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2015/06/23/renato-farina-non-e-betulla-aiuto-ci-cade-un-mito/1806444/>.

confidence with his readers (and those of the newspaper he worked for) through an illicit agreement with (and to the advantage of) a third party (the SISMI).

It remains to be understood, however, how and why the Italian community of journalists was not able to prevent such behaviours and, even when the entire story was made public, continued to tolerate the presence of Farina in the journalistic profession (the reference here is primarily addressed to those figures who tried to “safeguard” his professional reputation, allowing him to exercise his job despite his already clear ties with the SISMI). The answers, of course, may be various, but it is quite clear that the absence of a common set of professional standards and values (apart from personal political leaning) played a very considerable role in this.

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ANTICORRP is a large-scale research project funded by the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme. The full name of the project is "Anti-corruption Policies Revisited: Global Trends and European Responses to the Challenge of Corruption". The project started in March 2012 and will last for five years. The research is conducted by 20 research groups in fifteen countries.

The fundamental purpose of ANTICORRP is to investigate and explain the factors that promote or hinder the development of effective anti-corruption policies and impartial government institutions. A central issue is how policy responses can be tailored to deal effectively with various forms of corruption. Through this approach ANTICORRP seeks to advance the knowledge on how corruption can be curbed in Europe and elsewhere. Special emphasis is laid on the agency of different state and non-state actors to contribute to building good governance.

Project acronym: ANTICORRP

Project full title: Anti-corruption Policies Revisited: Global Trends and European Responses to the Challenge of Corruption

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