

## A 'Humanist Revival' For Italian Education

*Italy's new Education Minister takes on the 'music mafia' and others*

Italy's new Minister of Education, Mario Pedini, has vowed to restore Italy to, in his words, its "humanist roots." As an initial consequence, over 25 leading figures in the notorious Italian "music mafia" have been placed under indictment over the past week, ranging from the director of the famous La Scala opera to underworld figures who jointly dominate Italian musical life.

### ITALY

This network has controlled the administering of teaching posts in the nation's conservatories, decisions of who will or not "win" performance and composition contests, and even which music will be allowed in the concert hall.

#### *Combatting Terrorism*

Mario Pedini was shifted to the post of Education Minister from his former job as Minister of Science and Research during the last cabinet reshuffle over a month ago. This represents a move by Prime Minister Andreotti to place a known humanist figure — Erasmus scholar Pedini — in a position to combat the avowed aim of the massive terrorist and interlinked Maoist networks that have been deployed throughout and currently dominate the school system: the destruction of the population's humanist roots for the purpose of creating a malleable, anarchic mass of youth as a battering ram against the current pro-development government alliance of Communist Party (PCI) and Vatican circles.

As a result, Pedini has moved rapidly to dismantle the "music mafia" whose exclusive fostering of bestial atonal music and similar representations of immoral mental life is the "scholastic" compliment to terrorist activities and the punk rock which celebrates such bestiality. As announced by *Corriere della Sera*, about 28 of the most "respected" representatives of this network have been indicted under charges of illegally transferring money out of the country. To leave no doubts of the political intent of this action, the press pointed out that while other figures who have been indicted under similar charges had transferred huge sums running into the millions of dollars, the director of La Scala et al. have been charged with the transference of a mere couple of thousand dollars.

#### *Think Like Beethoven*

Pedini's housecleaning comes at the same time that political factions around the Italian government have begun to publicly endorse the Humanist Academy founded by the European Labor Party. Two weeks ago,

the Communist Party newspaper *Unita* published an unprecedented article on a lecture delivered at the Academy by Anno Hellenbroich entitled "Think Like Beethoven." *Unita* counterposed the science of mind as represented by Beethoven's music to the wave of terrorism currently in Italy, making clear that it considered the Academy's scientific approach the most effective means of combatting mental degeneracy of terrorism which threatens the capacity for human creative thought processes within the population. Subsequently the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* publicized the same lecture in its pages.

### A Return To Humanist Values

*The remarks excerpted here were made during an interview by the new Italian Education Minister Mario Pedini to the Rome daily Il Tempo, June 2, 1978:*

*Q: What do you think may be the root cause of the current malaise in our schools?*

*A: In a violent society, it is not surprising that the schools are disturbed and internally reflect the crisis of our time. That crisis is of a world which has grown affluent as never before, stimulated by greater conquests of scientific research and technology, but which does not find peace for lack of the moral and civilized values which man needs as well. A crisis where materialistic dissociation, to which we have always conceded in the past, is now being accentuated. . . .*

*Were the schools able to correct this degenerative tendency? Perhaps in other times, when the schools were fewer, in a defined, stable world. But certainly not in an epoch such as ours, where the schools have become mass schools, restructured, and whose transformation has been into schools that follow, not schools that lead.*

*Q: Which values do you believe must be rediscovered to correct the situation?*

*A: Spinoza wrote: "Only the young have a particular privilege: to know how to believe in life." Could Spinoza even write in those terms today? I would say not, if I look at the skepticism so widespread among today's youth; the delusion with which they evaluate our life, with which they assimilate so reluctantly a material well-being which does not satisfy them.*

*To rediscover values? Certainly. But what are the values? The moral rules, the established principles of natural law in which a society recognizes its identity and from which it derives its action and its law.*

*Historically contingent values? I do not believe so. In the past centuries, as well as in the evolution of nations, men have — to be able to live with one another — always*

believed in the value of human life, in the dignity of the individual, in living with other men in peace and in liberty. In substance, such values that, exalted in a particular way by Christendom, lead back to natural law and therefore touch upon all mankind.

*Q: What do you believe the reform policy can do to resolve the problems of instruction?*

*A:* Are we talking about reform or are we talking about the recovery of the schools? I believe above all in "recovery" as the necessity to reaffirm the dignity of the school, the respect for the function of the "primacy of knowledge," as my friend Prini says, that has been lost and for which there is no substitute. It is urgent to reaffirm the primacy of critical and moral formation of mankind. This premises that reforms are indispensable, that scholastic institutions should be adapted to the new characteristics of society. But these are not enough by themselves. . . .

*Q: What policy do you believe must be pursued to teach respect for and development of the students as persons?*

*A:* The school should give to youth the conditions for the exercise of their critical capacities, the use of the syllogism, of knowing how to pose a hypothesis and derive the conclusions from it. And this is even more important in these times in which we live with a crisis which, in many aspects, resembles the crisis in the Greek cities at the time of the Sophists. Then, as today, good was identified with the useful, truth with what it appeared to be to an individual person. Is it not thus today for rhetoric or demagoguery? It is necessary to return to the concept of true objectivity, to the consciousness of a good which is imposed as such on all mankind. It is necessary to refute relativism, the end of philosophy. . . .

*Q: Which system for recruitment of teaching personnel do you believe must be pursued to guarantee criteria of competence?*

*A:* The preparatory courses, at least as they have been realized up to now, have not qualified teachers to teach in the new school. Today, it seems to me that the objective conditions do not exist to do it over. . . . This must be changed. . . .

*Q: Which obstacles do you think of removing to assure the good functioning of the university in its capacity to conduct research?*

*A:* This subject could carry us far and would merit an in-

terview by itself. Research is a problem of means, but research is also a problem of vocation, and as such, it is not in agreement with the current level of functioning, the lack of productivity. . . . Here again we come to the central question: to solicit the best to do what is required.

Scientific research has thus need of a vast area of international cooperation. For this, it requires an increasingly sophisticated university, open to the outside and toward European society. Our new university must be like this if the government and Parliament will offer their support to a modern philosophy. . . .

*Q: What indications can you give, on this occasion, to the teachers, students and parents involved in the schools?*

*A:* I would like to talk to them all, but I cannot. Thus, I try to be like the Indian who climbs a hill and lights a fire, with the hope that another fire will respond in a far-off valley. I believe that the pleasures of culture, the recovery of the schools must be widely reported by every citizen, who has the responsibility of that civil service.

But I would also like to say that everyone together, politicians, scholars, and above all youth — those youth of whom we think perhaps too infrequently when we carry out reforms — we must make the schools significant with our philosophy. Think about the university: in the past, the university under the Casati law had behind it the conception of a nation-state, unified, scarcely formed after the Risorgimento. Much later, the reform had behind it the conception of idealism, a philosophy which has carried us then where it carried us . . . but in every case, a philosophy.

To sum up: What do we have behind the schools today, what significance can we give them? Must it be only a diploma and degree factory, or must it not also be an answer, for modern man, to the problems of his time? And what ideals to recall, on the eve of the European Parliament elections, if not a united Europe in which Italy can recover, with other peoples, from such violence and barbarism, a more mature civilization, more peaceful, capable of allowing mankind to live more constructively?

A new humanism, a la Maritain? For those who believe in the supernatural, yes. But equally for those who do not: a return to the humanist values so alive in our history and culture, of which everyone has need. Values capable of carrying us to play an important role in the growth of the new world and in the society of the year 2000, toward which we are approaching.