

To be or not to be an  
Italian:

BA Santamaria, culture,  
descent and the social  
exclusion of  
Italian-Australians

DISCUSSION 0

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Doctor of Philosophy

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# **To be or not to be an Italian: BA Santamaria, culture, descent and the social exclusion of Italian-Australians**

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## DECLARATION:

“I, Anthony Cappello, declare that the PhD thesis entitled To be or not to be an Italian: BA Santamaria, culture, descent and the social exclusion of Italian-Australians is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work”.

**Signature Date**

9/09/09



## **ABSTRACT**

B.A. Santamaria is perhaps Australia's best-known thinker who happens to be of an Italian descent and culture. While much has been written about this important thinker, very little of this writing has focused on his background and the Italian descent and culture from which he originated.

This doctorate is an historical exploration into the person of B.A. Santamaria, with a strong focus on his Italian descent and culture. This thesis looks at the question of Social Exclusion that applied to Italians in general, and in particular to B.A. Santamaria.

While mentioning the Australian Labor Party split of 1954-1955, this doctorate is more concerned with episodes pertaining to Santamaria's background: Italian migrants, the Aeolian Community, fascism, anti-fascism, the internment of Italian migrants, the land settlement schemes of the National Catholic Rural Movement and Santamaria's own admission later in life that his ideas were a product of his Italian background.

When looking at the ideas and organizations in Australia started by B.A. Santamaria, this doctorate looks closely at this connection to his Italian background. Finally the question is asked if B.A. Santamaria was our Italian-Australian hero.

Overall, this doctorate hopes to portray a more complete picture of B.A. Santamaria by including and emphasizing his Italian background and the problems he may have encountered in his work because of this background. It also highlights the social exclusion of Italians in Australia by focusing on B.A. Santamaria.

## **DEDICATION:**

To my wife, Brigid and my children- Liam, Clare and Michael.

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**CHAPTER 1:**  
**INTRODUCTION:**  
**METHODOLOGY, OUTLINE OF THE THESIS AND THE QUESTIONS  
POSED IN THIS THESIS.**

This chapter will endeavour to set out the methodology, the outline of the thesis as well as articulating clear questions that this thesis will attempt to answer. Overall this is a thesis about a person. The person is B.A. Santamaria. The question has often been asked: How would you define the life of B.A. Santamaria? He was a man involved in politics, but he never stood for a political party. He was a political commentator, but he did more than just comment. He commanded an army of zealous volunteers to work for his political ends. He was a Catholic layman, but when challenged by the Church, he opposed it by taking an independent position. Finally, he had an Italian background, but did that matter and did his Italian background assist or hinder the progress of his ideas? Were his ideas of Italian inspiration or origins? And for those of an Italian background in Australia was Santamaria the Italian-Australian hero? His Italian background poses further questions of how we view and interpret Santamaria primarily from the angle of his Italian background.

This thesis will attempt to answer these questions.

On February 25 1998, the papers reported on the passing of B.A. Santamaria, aged 82 years. For the next fortnight, much would be said about this so-called Catholic layman by many friends, critics and commentators of Santamaria, all grappling in trying to answer the same question: who was B.A. Santamaria?

By the end of the two week media frenzy, certain characteristics emerged as commentators reflected on the life of B.A. Santamaria. John Stone, Former Senator (1987-1990), found Santamaria an “Australian” despite his “early life in Brunswick, with his Italian parents, his passionate attachment to the Church of Rome, and his generally Euro centric view of world affairs.” Nonetheless, according to John Stone “none of this, however, made him less of an outstanding early product of that ‘assimilation-style’ Australian immigration policy...”<sup>1</sup> Another National Party Senator, Ron Boswell, described Santamaria as a fighter who “took on the church, state and industrial muscle with vigour, audacity and skill.”<sup>2</sup>

Geoffrey Barker of the *Australian* newspaper described him as “cold and precise, a Savonarola with a razor sharp mind and a powerful line of thumping oratory.”<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Davidson of the *Melbourne Age*, agreed with Santamaria’s economics but argued that his “major blemish was his ambition to subordinate Australian society to his Catholic moral values,”<sup>4</sup> while Peter Smark, of the *Sydney Morning Herald* found Santamaria a person who spent “his life espousing lost causes.”<sup>5</sup> Economist, John Edwards of the Hong Kong and Shanghai bank found that he had no “intellectual influence in economic policy” because he did not “understand economics.”<sup>6</sup> Former Senator Clyde Cameron, on the other hand, disagreed and stated that “he was the only writer in the country whose regular articles in the *Weekend Australian* gave vent to the thoughts and hopes of Labor’s true believers. I shared his opposition to the privatisation of our publicly owned assets.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. Stone, “Santamaria: an outstandingly right Australian”, *Australian Financial Review*, March 4 1998, (Newspaper clipping).

<sup>2</sup> Ron Boswell, “The man behind the movement”, *The Brisbane Courier*, March 3 1998, (Newspaper clipping).

<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey Barker, “Bob Santamaria: Not for reason alone”, *The Australian Financial Review*, March 6 1998, p.4.

<sup>4</sup> Kenneth Davidson, “Derided, out of Step – but Right”, *The Age*, March 5 1998, (Newspaper clipping).

<sup>5</sup> Peter Smark, “Memories of Santa, the man of 1000 feuds”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, February 28 1998, (Newspaper Clipping).

<sup>6</sup> John Edwards, “B.A. Santamaria 1915-1998: Economy Legacy”, *The Weekend Australian*, March 1 1998, p.21.

<sup>7</sup> Clyde Cameron, “True Believer”, *The Weekend Australian*, March 1 1998, p.21.



David Hirst writing in the *Australian* found that “Carlton [football team], communism and Catholicism, and a hatred of what Marx called the cash nexus, consumed his life.”<sup>8</sup>

Frank Devine writing also in the *Australian* in his column argued, “some have tried maladroitly, to sum Santa up as ‘a lay bishop.’” But Devine, himself argued that Santamaria was a “Mediterranean Catholic [who] ... carried the practice of his religion with less angst than the Irish majority in Australia...”<sup>9</sup> At the same time his son, Paul Santamaria claimed that his father’s “background as a son of poor Italian immigrants to Australia meant that it was hardly surprising that his abiding position was for the common man.”<sup>10</sup>

More and more of the papers began to acknowledge Santamaria’s Italian background. One example was Les Carlyon who wrote: “He was an old-fashioned Australian nationalist – and quintessentially Italian.”<sup>11</sup> Another example was Cardinal George Pell who noted at Santamaria’s funeral that when Bob Santamaria himself had visited Salina he marvelled how those tiny islands could have bred families with their instinct for stability which he so prized. According to Pell it was his Aeolian background which gave him “his values; the sense of family, the necessity of religious belief, the importance of accumulating some modest life.”<sup>12</sup> In the South Australian parliament, Michael Atkinson, Member for Spence, believed that the opposition Santamaria received throughout his life and in particular during the Labor Party split was because he was the: “the first Australian of a non-English speaking background to be prominent in Australian politics.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> David Hirst, “Red-baiter loved to be with Blues plebs”, *The Australian*, March 3 1998, (Newspaper Clipping).

<sup>9</sup> Frank Devine, “Remember him as an intellectual.” *The Australian*, March 2 1998, (Newspaper Clipping).

<sup>10</sup> Paul Santamaria, “Our Great Australian dad”, *The Daily Telegraph*, March 2 1998, p.11.

<sup>11</sup> Les Carlyon, “Slayer of False gods joins his true one”, *News Weekly*, March 21 1998, p.15.

<sup>12</sup> George Pell, “A Great Australian: A Saintly Catholic”, *News Weekly*, March 21 1998, p.11.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Atkinson, *Hansard: House of Assembly, Thursday February 16 1998*, Adelaide, 1998, p.569.

The key characteristics that emerged from the press's assessment of B.A. Santamaria were: "Australian, Catholic" and surprisingly the third characteristic "Italian". One thing also can be certain about this: the reflections about B.A. Santamaria after his death indicate that he remains one of the most polemical contributors of ideas in Australia who happened to have an Italian descent and culture.

Santamaria himself published numerous books and pamphlets as well as having his own column in the *Australian* newspaper and in *News Weekly* for many decades.<sup>14</sup> Further to his own writings there have been theses, biographies, and critiques on his life<sup>15</sup>. Yet, few considered the importance of Santamaria's ethnicity or have begun to explore it, this being the case even in spite of Santamaria's own emphasis on his peasant Italian background later in his life.<sup>16</sup>

## MY ENCOUNTERS WITH B.A. SANTAMARIA AND THE MOVEMENT

This thesis has a personal connection for the author. Not only did I meet B.A.

Santamaria but I was a member for many years of the Movement begun by Santamaria as well as working for his organization for over five years.

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<sup>14</sup> B.A. Santamaria, *The Price of Freedom: The Movement After 10 Years* (Hawthorn Press: Melbourne, 1958); *The Movement: 1941-1960 An Outline* (Hawthorn Press: Melbourne, 1960); Daniel Mannix: *The Quality of Leadership* (Melbourne University Press: Melbourne, 1984); *Australia at the Crossroads: Reflections of an Outsider* (Melbourne University Press: Melbourne, 1987); *Patterns of a Christian Society* (Self-Published: Melbourne, 1956); *A Memoir* (Oxford University Press: Melbourne, 1997); *The Earth, Our Mother* (Areluan: Melbourne, 1945), *Philosophies in Collision* (National Civic Council: Melbourne, 1970); there are many more examples.

<sup>15</sup> M. Florio, "The Social Thought/Doctrines of B.A. Santamaria", Hons. Bachelor of Arts, Latrobe University, 1991; B. Duncan, "From Ghetto to Crusade: A Study of the Social and Political Thought of Catholic Opinion Makers in Sydney during the 1930s", Doctor of Philosophy, University of Sydney, 1987; John Robert Barich, "Functions, Scope, and Organization of the National Civic Council, 1957 Onwards", Masters of Arts, Australian National University, 1968; B.A. Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, (Oxford University Press: Melbourne, 1981); Bruce Duncan, *Crusade or Conspiracy: Catholics and the Anti-Communist Struggle in Australia*, (UNSW: Sydney, 2001); Paul Ormonde (ed), *Santamaria Politics of Fear*, (Spectrum: Melbourne, 2000); R. Fitzgerald, *The Pope's Battalions, Santamaria, Catholicism and the Labor Split*, (University of Queensland Press: Brisbane, 2003); J.D. Pringle, *Australian Accent* (Chatto: London, 1959); T.R. Luscombe, *Builders and Crusaders: Prominent Catholics in Australian History*, (Lansdowne Press: Melbourne, 1967); Eureka Papers, *50 Years of the Santamaria Movement*, (Jesuit Publications: Richmond, 1992); Patrick Morgan (editor), *B.A. Santamaria: Your Most Obedient Servant: Selected Letters 1938-1996*, (Miegunyah Press: Melbourne, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> "Being a Catholic in 1990s, Rev. James Murray Interviews Bob Santamaria", *AD2000*, June 1990, Pp.7-9.

My earliest recollections of B.A. Santamaria came as a child. Sunday morning was very different to what it is in my adult life. There was no Sunday Mass. We just didn't go. Occasionally, my mother went but we rarely went with her. We went to a Catholic school and took all the sacraments associated with becoming a Catholic. We even went to midnight Mass. But Sunday was staying at home until lunchtime when we all would gather to watch the wrestling on television. However something annoying occurred just before the wrestling. A short bald man would appear on the TV and simply talk, in anger as I recall from my childhood, for fifteen minutes. Later in life I realised that this man was B.A. Santamaria. It seemed to me as a child to be the longest fifteen minutes. It was amusing to read a letter to the editor in the *Australian* newspaper from a John Lamont who I gather is the same age as myself who writes as "a seven-year-old, I only knew him as the 'How-do-you-do bald guy on TV on Sunday afternoons before *Roadrunner*.'" <sup>17</sup>

It was to my horror, a young man who had embraced the Catholic Church as an adult, to discover that this man, Santamaria, was an important Catholic layman. As a practising Catholic in Melbourne, it was inevitable that I was to run into the Movement, the organization started and presided over by B.A. Santamaria. Through the Thomas More Centre, I found myself attending his Thomas More groups. The Thomas More Centre was an organization started by B.A. Santamaria to recruit Catholics into the Movement. Before I knew it I was being trained as a leader in the Movement. I was only 21 years of age. The Movement was started to fight Communism in the Australian unions (See Chapter 3) and in the 1980s, the Movement was in an unsettled state with the collapse of the Berlin Wall. It needed a new enemy. This enemy now became those philosophies that undermined the traditional family and the religious faith (Catholic). At the time I

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<sup>17</sup> John Lamont, "Letter to the Editor", *The Australian*, March 3 1998, (Newspaper Clipping).

was told it was mainly secular humanism. I was also told that there was a major fight going on in the Catholic Church. Just as the Communists were taking over the unions in the 1940s and 1950s, now it was the “liberals” taking over the Catholic Church. They held all the important posts in universities, Church agencies, bishops’ conferences, and schools. My role with the Thomas More Centre was to infiltrate or “permeate” these areas and help save the Church from this perceived threat.

When I did my Bachelor of Theology – at what the Movement defined as a liberal theological College – I undertook intelligence work for the Movement, reporting on what was being taught by some lecturers so that its journal, *AD2000*, could report it through its pages. But there was no time to carry out such work and this made the Movement officials quite frustrated. During my last year of my degree I did my major thesis on Italians in the Church and it was while doing this project that I began to ask the following questions to those officials I had met at the Thomas More Centre. Questions like who are you? What is the National Civic Council? Why is it so secretive? The selection of questions led me to be interviewed by a short, pipe smoking Movement organiser, the so-called Victorian State President of the National Civic Council. It was an unforgettable experience. The interview took place at the headquarters of the Movement, in the office of the Victorian State President (a position that I was to occupy many years later). The room was dark, the blinds were closed, he smoked a pipe and so his room was smoky. His room was also one of the untidiest rooms I had ever seen. Later in life I came to believe the untidy room was a mere front to show those who visited how much work they covered. But it was a mere smoke screen and when I occupied the room some ten years later, most of the paperwork was found to be completely irrelevant and ended up in the dumpster.

At this meeting, the Movement or the National Civic Council was never discussed, but the crisis at hand was described in incredible detail. We were doomed and I was being recruited into the remnant from which the Church would be rebuilt. Today as I reflect with the knowledge of hindsight I realise how gullible I was. In more recent times, I have found myself reflecting and have come to the conclusion that back then I was an adherent to a sect-like organization. I believed the stories and responded blindly.

It was while doing my Masters that I began to do more work in the head office of the NCC. It was here that I met B.A. Santamaria on several occasions. He reminded me of my own grandfather, short with big ears. As children we would always joke on how big my grandfather's, and my father's, ears were. The appearance of Santamaria reminded me of that Sicilian characteristic, the big ears.

After completing my Masters I had moved on and lost touch with Santamaria and the Movement. I got married and to my surprise one of the Movement organisers turned up at my wedding. Also, during this time I had met many people who told me horror stories about the Movement, including Gerald Mercer who had suffered in the fallout from the Movement in the 1980s.

When Santamaria died in 1998, I didn't attend his funeral. In fact, somehow I missed out on the news of his death, only finding out a fortnight later. But I was instantly attracted to the emerging legend of B.A. Santamaria. Our long needed Italian-Australian hero may have finally arrived. So it was with enthusiasm that I responded to an out-of-the blue telephone call in 2000 to come and talk to Peter Westmore, BA Santamaria's successor, about a position with the Movement.

Once again like years before, I was given an updated picture of the crisis and asked if I would join them as a publisher and a part-time organiser. I was at this point of my life less interested in the crisis at hand, but rather more interested in developing myself into a publisher and this position - on paper - gave me the freedom to do so. But in time, I would discover that I would be less of a publisher and more of an organiser for the Movement.

From 2000 until 2005, during which time I started my Doctorate, I was to work within the inner core of the Movement. Here I began to ask too many questions and found myself involved with others in an attempt to change the direction of the Movement. In this attempt we failed, and many of us left the Movement bitter and disillusioned. For me it helped my understanding of both the Movement and the subject of this thesis, B.A. Santamaria. It has given me a first hand knowledge of the Movement's inner workings, and how Santamaria created this organisation in his own image.

Towards the end of his life and with his death, it seems quite obvious that B.A. Santamaria could be described as a great "Italian-Australian" Catholic. While there are no doubts about his Catholicism, there are doubts about how he saw himself in relation to his parent's place of birth, Italy and the Aeolian Islands. Was he really of peasant stock like he claimed later in his life? Were his ideas really a product of his Italian background? Did he have a "great Italian heart"<sup>18</sup> as described by his daughter?

My time in the Movement was post- Santamaria. But it was only a year after his death. Therefore, not much had changed in the culture of the Movement. The people who

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<sup>18</sup> Mary Helen Woods, "All in the Family", *The Weekend Australian*, March 1 1998, p.17.



surrounded him were the same, the atmosphere that existed and even Santamaria's office remained as it was when B.A. Santamaria left it. The only change, it seemed was that Santamaria was no longer there, and not coming back. There were times, though, when I felt that those who worked at the Movement headquarters almost anticipated his coming back; the office remained untouched, the bookshelves, photos, plaques, unmoved. It was a monument to the man, B.A. Santamaria, as if the Movement were as when Santamaria left the building. Not much had changed. Even the family still managed the trust that financed the Movement. The new National President did not even know all the inner workings of the funding of the Movement.

## **DEFINITIONS, METHODOLOGY AND QUESTIONS THAT WILL BE EXPLORED.**

In this thesis the word "Ethnicity" replaces the word "race"<sup>19</sup> as a term to describe the division of peoples. Whereas race was defined according to the biological idea of division of humankind, ethnicity is loosely defined as having the characteristics of "descent and culture."<sup>20</sup> In describing B. A. Santamaria's ethnicity I have opted for the use of the term "descent and culture". Steve Fenton in his book *Ethnicity* uses descent and culture to describe ethnicity arguing that "people do not just possess cultures of shared ancestry; they elaborate these into the idea of a community founded upon these attributes."<sup>21</sup>

The word Italian is used often throughout this thesis. What we define as "Italian" in this thesis is a person who claims descent or cultural affiliation from the regions which are regarded as Modern Italy, without necessarily having been born there. In the case of

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<sup>19</sup> S. Fenton, *Ethnicity*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2003) p.91.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid*, p.109.

B.A. Santamaria, his parents were born in the Aeolian Islands, just north of Sicily. Therefore, throughout this thesis references will be made to Santamaria's Aeolian background. This Aeolian background will also at times be referred to as Sicilian. Of course, Aeolian is more specific than Italian but where there hasn't been sufficient material on the Aeolians the author has relied on studies of Sicilians and Southern Italians.

Another concept used is "Social Exclusion". Social Exclusion is a multi-dimensional word and at times is more commonly associated with socio-economic factors. Social exclusion also goes beyond "race" and "culture" as the reasons of exclusion, it can also include, poverty, educational status as well as social class.<sup>22</sup> Racism is another word used in this thesis and it is a stronger word and more specific. Racism is discrimination against a person or people based on race.<sup>23</sup> Social exclusion is the result of the failure to incorporate non-British migrants who settled in Australia and their descendants into the structure of Australian society and into the representation of the Australian nation.<sup>24</sup>

The use of the word Movement is referred to throughout this thesis. A specific definition of the word Movement is the name of the organization begun by Santamaria in 1940 called the Catholic Social Studies Movement, later to become the National Civic Council, but the word Movement also had a more general meaning as a term used to apply to all the organizations started by Santamaria like the National Catholic Rural Movement, The Catholic Social Studies Movement, The National Civic Council, the Australian Family Association and the Thomas More Centre. All these organizations served to recruit members into the core organization – the Catholic Social Studies

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid*, p.3.

<sup>22</sup> The Adler School of Professional Psychology dedicates a webpage and publishes Occasional Papers on Social Exclusion - <http://www.adler.edu/index.asp>.

Movement or the National Civic Council; hence with the lines of distinction blurred, the Movement is used in this thesis in the more general context.

This thesis is a history. It is a history, involving the particular person of B.A. Santamaria. The author in writing this history is coming from a cultural background that is similar to that of the subject. The author does not only share the cultural background with the subject but also the Catholic background. The author in writing this history is also aware of the limitations of such an approach and will attempt to “make the ideas of a past culture intelligible to readers in their own culture without radically misrepresenting them.”<sup>25</sup> A more detailed breakdown of the methodology based on each of the chapters is found in the section at the start of each chapter.

By calling this thesis a history, the author makes a few claims. As argued by historian G.R. Elton in *The Practice of History*: “The study of history comprehends everything that men have said, thought done or suffered.”<sup>26</sup> History is also “recoverable” and history is “confined to that part of it of which evidence either survives or can be reconstructed in the mind.”<sup>27</sup> Furthermore as argued by Elton, “Historical study is not the study of the past but the study of the present traces of the past.” The author is fortunate because Santamaria wrote so much, and although Santamaria’s writings are generally opinions, they still arise out of an historical context and for this reason there is plenty of history to recover. Yet, his family history, and his own recollection of his family history, has been recovered in traces, through his own recollections via interviews, conducted unfortunately towards the end of his life. Thus with the knowledge of the Italian community and traces of stories and material, his Italian background has been

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<sup>23</sup> Robert Miles, *Racism*, (Routledge: London, 1989), p.48.

<sup>24</sup> D. Dutton, *One of Us: A Century of Australian Citizenship*, (UNSW Press: Sydney, 2002) Pp.151-156.

<sup>25</sup> C.B. McCullagh, *The Truth of History*, (Routledge: London, 1998) p.166.

reconstructed and as Elton argues History is “concerned with all those human sayings, thoughts, deeds and sufferings which occurred in the past and have left deposit; and it deals with them from the point of view of happening, change and the particular.”<sup>28</sup>

Chapter one is the introduction, which will include my own reflection and involvement with Santamaria and the Movement. Chapter two will be a biographical outline of the life of B.A. Santamaria, episodes which are of general interest and “have had important historical consequences...”.<sup>29</sup> In doing this very little interpretation is presented to the reader. The purpose of this is to put a framework around Santamaria’s life in which episodes of his life will be further explained and explored in subsequent chapters.

Chapter three will look at the published literature about Santamaria. This analysis will also explore the categories that such interpretations fit into.

Chapter four is a history of Santamaria and a sociological study of his background from the time of his birth until his marriage in October 1939. This history will no doubt have a bias. The bias is that it is an account of the early life of B.A. Santamaria - from the perspective of his Italian culture and descent. Chapter five will continue the history from October 1939 until his death in 1998. However, unlike chapter four, there will be limited sociological study.

Chapter six will explore Santamaria’s writings about issues related to his background – beginning in 1934 until his death in 1998. This chapter will adhere strictly to the writings and speeches of Santamaria that relate to his background and culture. Issues of

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<sup>26</sup> G.R. Elton, *The Practice of History*, (Fontana: London, 1967) p.20.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.* p.24

economics, national defence, welfare, and even communism will not be discussed unless they reveal insights into his background.

Chapter seven will look at the issue of social exclusion of Italians in Australia, in the Australian Catholic Church and in particular in the life of B.A. Santamaria as a result of his Italian surname and background. This chapter will have two sections. The first is a chronological history of social exclusion of Italians in Australia, and the second, a more precise look at episodes of social exclusions that B.A. Santamaria had to endure because of his background.

Chapter eight will explore the institutions that Santamaria was involved in: the National Catholic Rural Movement, Catholic Action and The Catholic Social Studies Movement. How much these institutions were influenced by his Italian background is explored in this chapter. Chapter nine is the conclusion where, in light of the previous chapters, the thesis will explore who B.A. Santamaria was and where he stood in relation to his Italian descent and culture as well as attempting to answer the questions, as much as it can, posed to the reader in the introduction.

This thesis will explore several questions. One essential question will be “was Santamaria someone who was heavily influenced by his Italian background?”, has many parts and I am certain will have several answers. What was Santamaria’s attitude to his Italian culture? Was Santamaria excluded and isolated because of his Italian background and finally, is Santamaria our Italian-Australian hero?

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<sup>29</sup> *McCullagh, op.cit.* p.99.

Further exploration of those questions will also include: did B.A. Santamaria suffer major political setbacks because of his Italian background? If evidence is presented that Santamaria was faced with social exclusion, further questions will be posed such as how did Santamaria react to the social exclusion that was based on his Italian background. Did he return fire by explaining and demonstrating the virtues of Italians? Or did he simply succumb to the racism and downplay his Italian background? Did he become a critic of the Italians arguing that they needed to adapt and become assimilated into the Anglo-Saxon way of life?

Apart from answering the questions above, this thesis will present Santamaria from within his or our Italian-Australian world. In exploring the background he came from, his parents, his Italian family values, the Italian community and his working class suburb of Brunswick, this thesis hopes to bring a somewhat new interpretation of Santamaria – an interpretation that has yet to appear in any of the literature.

## **AN ITALIAN-AUSTRALIAN HERO?**

The question is first asked is the notion of “the hero” a legitimate sociological concept to be applied to the person of B.A. Santamaria. This thesis by adopting the notion of hero as it has been used in the modern form as opposed to the classical Greek notion, argues that such a concept is applicable. In Catholic theology “heroes” are seen as “Saints”, examples of people that Catholics can look towards for example and inspiration: “The saint provides a model of charity...”<sup>30</sup> Yet, the role of Sainthood on Santamaria involves a certain degree of perfection and virtue and to apply such a concept, vices involved with his work would have to be ignored. Saints and politics don’t seem to work hand in hand.



Therefore, the modern hero is a concept that can take on the role of example and inspiration for the Catholic and non-Catholic alike.

In Greek methodology, the hero was ranked as a demi-God, a character empowered with supernatural gifts, while Hegel distinguishes three types of heroes: the epic, tragic and dramatic hero. These three concepts of heroes were usually portrayed in theatre.<sup>31</sup> But the ancient Greek concept of a hero is different from the modern notion of hero.

Thomas Carlyle once wrote that the history of the world is the “biography of Great Men.”<sup>32</sup> Carlyle was writing about heroes and hero worship. Heroes and hero worship have played a major role in Western society. A modern hero is someone we can hold in high esteem, someone who inspires us to follow his or her example and someone who personifies the best qualities and challenges us to move beyond the ordinary. Ben Fallow and Samuel Brunk argue in their introduction to the book *Hero and Hero Cults in South America* argues that a hero is a person to whom remarkable courage and noble traits are attributed by members of a community thus acquiring a lasting place and status in that community’s culture.<sup>33</sup> In this instance that community is the Italian-Australian community. Therefore, for there to be an Italian-Australian hero the qualities needed are: courage to stand up for Italian migrants, pride in one’s Italian background and being prepared to defend it. Also, it was necessary to show the virtues of an Italian background.

In the United States, Mother Francis Xavier Cabrini was the American-Italian hero, but she also became America’s first canonised Saint. Mother Cabrini only died a year after the birth of B.A. Santamaria. Her passing and B.A. Santamaria’s birth may have heralded

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<sup>30</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, (St Pauls: Sydney, 1994) p.521.

<sup>31</sup> P. Pavis, C. Shantz and M. Carlson, *Dictionary of the Theatre* (University of Toronto Press: Toronto 1998) p.521.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic History* (Online edition Gutenberg Edition: London, 1840).

the beginning of the Italian Australian hero. But why do we need an Italian- Australian hero?

As it will be argued in Chapter Seven of this thesis, the perception and representation of Italian migrants and their generations in Australia has been a negative one. A good example is the representation of Italians on Australian television well described by Italian-Australian producer Rosa Colosimo: “the husband is a fruiterer called Luigi or Giuseppe, and is stupid, possessive and suspicious. The wife is fat, dressed in black, with no make-up, and is called Maria or Concetta. The sons have little intelligence but their parents want them to become doctors or lawyers, while the daughters are absolute geniuses who their parents do not understand in their insistence that the woman’s place is in the home, preferably in the kitchen....”<sup>34</sup>

To combat this negative stereotype, we need to present a person who by his example presented an alternative. Such was the positive reaction that followed Santamaria’s death that the author was presented with a candidate for our Italian-Australian hero. Therefore, is B.A. Santamaria our Italian-Australian hero?

This thesis has relied on mainly primary sources consisting of published works of B.A. Santamaria, interviews conducted on the subject, private correspondences by the subject and letters to the author by those who know the subject. This history also contains minutes of executive meetings, published and edited letters of the subject, journal articles, published works on the subject and personal recollections. The author has tried to limit his personal recollections as much as possible. The author has found that there was an abundance of material but much of it was extremely repetitive. It will be argued

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<sup>33</sup> Ben Fallow and Samuel Brunk, *Heroes and Cults in Modern Latin America* (University of Texas Press: Dallas: 2006) p.1.

<sup>34</sup> Andrew Jakubowicz (ed), *Racism, Ethnicity and the Media*, (Allen and Unwin: St.Leonards, 1994) p.114.

that B.A. Santamaria was a “cutter and paster” with ideas and themes repeated in articles, newspaper columns and letters.

## CHAPTER 2:

### B.A. SANTAMARIA: HIS LIFE AND TIMES.

This chapter is a concise historical framework of the life of B.A. Santamaria which is set out in episodes that will be explored further in this thesis. This will be done by introducing B.A. Santamaria's life and work with the Movement within an Australian historical context. I have tried to limit interpretation as much as possible to present a survey set in chronological order. There is, of course, an interpretation in choosing which episodes to use and which not to use. The author has selected those aspects of his life which other biographers have mentioned as having historical consequences.

Patrick Morgan in his recent published letters of B.A. Santamaria puts Santamaria's life into three double decades: "From the mid 1930s to the 1950s he was engaged in the internal anti-communist struggle in Australia. From the mid 1950s to the mid 1970s, while retaining his domestic interest, he went off shore and was involved in the wider anti-communist struggle in Asia."<sup>35</sup> The third stage according to Morgan was "from the 1970s to the 1990s" where his focus was back on Australian domestic issues.<sup>36</sup> In this thesis, chapters 4 and 5 will divide Santamaria's life somewhat differently. The thesis will revolve around Santamaria's geographical positioning: prior to 1939, his time in Brunswick, and post 1939 where he lived in Hawthorn and Balwyn until his death in 1998. The reason for this break-down will be made clear to the reader in Chapter 4.

B.A. Santamaria's father, Giuseppe Santamaria, migrated from the Aeolian Islands when he was seven years old, while his mother, Maria Terzita Costa, also from the Aeolian

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<sup>35</sup> Morgan, *op.cit.* p.530.

Islands, had migrated when she was twenty years of age in 1912.<sup>37</sup> Santamaria's parents were married in 1914 in Maryborough, Victoria, from where they moved to Brunswick and opened a fruit shop in Sydney Road Brunswick.<sup>38</sup>

Bob Santamaria was their first-born child, born on August 15, 1915. In the early years the Santamarias lived in Sydney Road Brunswick on the second floor of their fruit shop.<sup>39</sup> B.A. Santamaria came from a family of six children, five boys, himself, Felix, Bernard, Joe and John and one sister, Josephine.<sup>40</sup>

Santamaria's primary schooling was at St. Ambrose's Catholic School, Brunswick. It was also the school of his father who began there when he arrived from Italy at the age of seven. Santamaria was then educated by the Christian Brothers at St Joseph's North Melbourne and later in St Kevin's East Melbourne.<sup>41</sup> There is no doubt that the Christian Brothers had an impact on him as he argues in *Against the Tide*: "To their lasting credit, they insisted that faith must be validated by reason, placing a high premium on the intellectual foundations of both religion and morality."<sup>42</sup> After St. Kevin's, B.A.

Santamaria went to Melbourne University in 1932 where he studied history and political science.<sup>43</sup> He then went on to study law. It was while he was at Melbourne University that he met like-minded Catholics who later became the nucleus of the Campion Society.

The Campion Society was a group of University graduates and undergraduates who came together informally "to discuss Catholic teaching on problems that affected them, to

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<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> Joseph Santamaria, *The Education of Dr Joe*, (Connor Court Publishing: Ballan, 2007) p.7.

<sup>38</sup> Morgan, *op.cit.* p.xiii.

<sup>39</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview with Dr Robert Pascoe, October 2 1986, Typed Transcript, Vaccari Italian Historical Trust. Victoria University, Footscray.

<sup>40</sup> *Ricordo del Santuario di S. Antonio e dei Fondatori*, (Campinile Printing: Melbourne, 1969) p.385.

<sup>41</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.8.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Morgan, *op.cit.* p.xiii.

better inform themselves and to keep in touch with advanced Catholic thought.”<sup>44</sup> This they did by “correspondence with Catholic leaders overseas, especially in the field of the newly developing Catholic Action.”<sup>45</sup> As a young Campion in 1936, Santamaria became founder and editor of the *Catholic Worker*, a paper based on the *American Catholic Worker* started by Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day. B.A. Santamaria remained editor of the *Catholic Worker* until 1938.<sup>46</sup>

It was at Melbourne University that Santamaria engaged in debates and the best-known debate was the famous Spanish Civil War debate in March 1937, where other Catholic students joined Santamaria. It was here that he created havoc when he “raised the cry ‘Long Live Christ the King’” which was the final cry of the Mexican Jesuit martyr Father Miguel Pro.<sup>47</sup> The mention of the debate in this chapter is for the simple reason that the famous Australian historian Manning Clark recalled it.<sup>48</sup>

In 1937, upon completing his law degree, B.A. Santamaria became assistant to the Director of the inaugurated National Secretariat of Catholic Action, Frank Maher. The Australian bishops, using the European examples of Catholic Action as its model, started the National Secretariat of Catholic Action.<sup>49</sup> Catholic Action was defined at the time as the “participation of the laity – that is, ordinary men and women... take part in the hierarchical apostolate of the Church – in the work of the Bishops....”<sup>50</sup> It was with

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<sup>44</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.16.

<sup>45</sup> Frank Murphy, *Daniel Mannix, Archbishop of Melbourne*, (Advocate Press: Melbourne, 1948), p.176.

<sup>46</sup> A. Campbell, op.cit. p.63.

<sup>47</sup> David Kehoe, “Warrior intellectual lived his life for the Kingdom of God”, *The Record*, March 5 1998, p.8.

<sup>48</sup> R. Fitzgerald, *The Pope's Battalions: Santamaria, Catholicism and the Labor Split* (University of Queensland Press: St. Lucia, 2003) p.38.

<sup>49</sup> *Official Statement of the Archbishops and Bishops of Australia, Catholic Action in Australia*, (Australian Catholic Truth Society: Melbourne, 1949) p.17.

<sup>50</sup> K.W. Mitchell, *This is Catholic Action*, (Australian Catholic Truth Society: Melbourne, 1941) p.5.



Catholic Action that Santamaria found a “ready-made meeting place for Catholics interested in the Communist problem.”<sup>51</sup>

In 1939, B.A. Santamaria married Helen Power and moved to Hawthorn.<sup>52</sup> He had met Helen Power at the Catholic library run by Fr William Hackett.

Beginning in 1940 and working until 1956, B.A. Santamaria in collaboration with several Australian bishops drafted many of the Social Justice Statements: “he and the bishops were both involved in taking ideas from Europe and America and adapting them to Australian conditions.”<sup>53</sup> And as argues Michael Hogan as the editor of the book on the Australian Social Justice statements: “The Australian Catholic Church has reason to be grateful to B.A. Santamaria for articulating so well those principles of social justice.”<sup>54</sup> With the outbreak of the War, Archbishop Mannix, Archbishop of Melbourne, sought exemptions for B.A. Santamaria and two other Catholic activists from military service. The exemption, though not sought by B.A. Santamaria, allowed him to work without interruption in the Catholic Social Apostolate.<sup>55</sup>

In 1941 as Assistant Director of the National Secretariat of Catholic Action, B.A. Santamaria was appointed National Secretary of the National Catholic Rural Movement. The NCRM’s motto was to “Restore Christ to the Countryside and the Countryside to Christ.” B.A. Santamaria remained National Secretary of the NCRM until May 1960, but

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<sup>51</sup> B.A. Santamaria, *The Movement 1941-60: An Outline* (Hawthorn Press: Melbourne, 1960) p.12.

<sup>52</sup> Paul Santamaria, Letter to the Author, May 22 2007, ACA.

<sup>53</sup> Michael Hogan (ed) *Justice Now: Statements of the Australian Catholic Bishops 1940-1966*, (Dept. of Government and Public Administration, University of Sydney: Sydney, 1990) p.4.

<sup>54</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> For a thorough explanation of the circumstances see Bruce Duncan, *Crusade or Conspiracy*, (UNSW Press: Sydney, 2001) p.45.

he continued to act as a member of the National Executive as well as becoming a life member of the organization.<sup>56</sup>

It was with the approach of Labor parliamentarian Bert Cremean to B.A. Santamaria that the Catholic Social Studies Movement began, referred later on in this thesis as the Movement. Although the Movement began in 1942, B.A. Santamaria recalled that its origins went back to 1938 when some anti-communist trade unionists approached him to help fight against some union leaders in the Newport Railways Workshops.<sup>57</sup> Some of the original group are still alive at the time of writing, including Frank Scully, Father Robert Markey and Judd Moore.

The Movement's scope was primarily industrial and union based, fighting the Communists in the unions.<sup>58</sup> The work of the Movement was successful and with the support of the bishops it won union positions back from Communist control.

In 1943, the Movement with B.A. Santamaria began the newspaper *Freedom* later to be called *News Weekly*. Here it stated in its first editorial: "*Freedom* is published because there is a need of a fighting paper devoted without reserve to the cause of social reconstruction based on the inspiration of Christianity, the desire for justice among all classes, and the militant defence of freedom – menaced to-day by the external enemy and by the cruel fanatics, both of the Right and the Left, who seek to destroy our democracy and submerge it in the brutalities of Fascism and Communism according to their taste."<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *Rural Life*, April 1961, p.5.

<sup>57</sup> Santamaria, *Australia at the Crossroads*, p.80.

<sup>58</sup> B.A. Santamaria, "Fiftieth anniversary Speech, (Speaking Notes)" October 7 1991, (ACA).

In its first issue it also boldly stated: "Freedom stands for 100 per cent trade unionism. It wants every worker to be a member of his union."<sup>60</sup> *News Weekly* was to peak during the Labor Party split when Evatt mentioned *News Weekly* in his speech attacking the role of the Movement. As a result, the circulation increased by 7000, achieving its highest subscription of 25,000 readers.<sup>61</sup> At the time of Santamaria's death, just fewer than 4000 subscribed to *News Weekly*.

Santamaria and the Movement were also supported by the Industrial groups, which were started and financed by the Australian Labor Party. With the groups and the Movement, many unions were won back from the Communists. Although associated with the Movement, the groups were independent.<sup>62</sup>

In 1945, B.A. Santamaria published his first book entitled *Our Earth, Our Mother*. In this book he set out to argue for the "extension of rural settlements" in order to address the decline in population and the "lure of the cities" which according to B.A. Santamaria was the main reason for the demographic decline in the Australian population.<sup>63</sup>

After the war, Santamaria set his mind on the possibility of settling migrants in rural areas throughout Australia. Using the National Catholic Rural Movement as the vehicle to drive the schemes and with the support of the Italian Government, a pilot scheme to settle Italian migrants in rural areas throughout Victoria and Tasmania was presented to the several Australian State Governments during 1953-1955. One such plan of migrant settlement went to the Victorian parliament in 1953. The plan known as the Land Settlement Scheme was agreed to by the Cain - Labor Government of Victoria to run as

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<sup>59</sup> *Freedom*, September 25 1943, p.1.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid*, p.3.

<sup>61</sup> Jim Matheson, "News Weekly: 44 Years of Production", *News Weekly*, September 16 1987, Pp.9-10.

a pilot scheme and when Labor Minister in the Cain Government, Robert Holt, introduced the legislation to the parliament granting crown land to the NCRM, Holt stumbled, tore up the bill and stormed out of parliament. The bill was eventually passed in the early hours of the morning by the then Victorian Labor Premier, John Cain. According to Santamaria, the outburst made by Minister Holt primed “a major event in the chapter of unpleasant incidents which led to the Labor split less than a year later.”<sup>64</sup>

It was also through the work of the Movement and the National Catholic Rural Movement that the Co-operation Act was introduced into Victoria. The Act - made possible through Movement Victorian parliamentarian Frank Scully – provided a framework for credit unions.<sup>65</sup>

With the success of the groups and the Movement Santamaria was courted by Dr Herbert Vere Evatt, the leader of the Australian Labor Party, just before the 1954 elections.<sup>66</sup> Santamaria had interpreted his success with the Movement in the unions and with the ALP with the optimistic belief that he could now “within a period of five or six years be able to completely transform the leadership of the Labor Movement, and to introduce into Federal and State spheres large numbers of members who possess a clear realisation of what Australia demands of them, and the will to carry it out.”<sup>67</sup> But it was not to be – just as elements of the ALP had resisted the take over of the ALP by the Communists, so too were they going to resist a take over by the groups and the Movement.

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<sup>62</sup> Robert Murray, “The Split” in *The Australian Century*, R. Manne (ed), (Text: Melbourne, 1999) p.153.

<sup>63</sup> B.A. Santamaria, *The Earth, Our Mother*, (Araluen: Melbourne, 1945) p.129.

<sup>64</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.129.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.* p.128.

<sup>66</sup> Alan Reid, “Movement that ground to a halt”, *The Bulletin*, June 9 1981, p.72.

<sup>67</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Letter to Archbishop D. Mannix, December 11 1952, Letter in full in Morgan, *op.cit.* p.75.

At the Federal election in 1954, the ALP was defeated despite polling slightly higher in the primary vote. As a consequence the industrial groups lost favour with the ALP, as did the Movement. This changed attitude towards the groups and the Movement came on October 6, 1954, when Evatt accused the Movement's journal *News Weekly* of being subversive within the Australian Labor Party. The statement became the trigger for what is known as the Labor Party split. The statement, one page long, said in parts:

...But in the election, one factor told heavily against us – the attitude of a small minority group of members, located particularly in the State of Victoria, which has, since 1949, become increasingly disloyal to the Labor Movement and the Labor leadership. Adopting methods which strikingly resemble both Communist and Fascist infiltration of larger groups, some of these groups have created an almost intolerable situation – calculated to deflect the Labor Movement from the pursuit of established Labor objectives and ideals.<sup>68</sup> ... It seems certain that the activities of this small group are largely directed from outside the Labor Movement. The Melbourne *News Weekly* appears to act as their organ. A serious position exists.<sup>69</sup>

This statement by Evatt led to the eventual expulsion from the Australian Labor party of many of the industrial groupers and members of the Movement. In all as the result of this expulsion the Labor Party lost 18 state parliamentarians, 23 endorsed Labor candidates for state seats at the elections due to be held later in 1955, seven federal parliamentarians and seven Melbourne city councillors.<sup>70</sup> These expelled groupers went on to form first the Anti-Communist Labor Party and then the Democratic Labor Party, which according to B.A. Santamaria was “intended simply as a bargaining weapon to force the ALP to reverse its policy.”<sup>71</sup> Although Santamaria supported the Democratic Labor Party, he never joined the party and so, surprisingly, was never a member.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Robert Murray, *The Split: Australian Labor in the Fifties*, (Cheshire: Melbourne, 1970) p.180.

<sup>69</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> Robert Murray, “The Split” in *The Australian Century*, edited by R. Manne, (Text: Melbourne, 1999) p.175.

<sup>71</sup> Santamaria, *Australia at the Crossroads*, p.85.

<sup>72</sup> B.A. Santamaria, *Spotlight on Santamaria: A Commentary on the Present and Future of Australia* (Hawthorn Press: Melbourne, 1960) p.2.

After the split, simmering tensions among some of the Sydney Catholic bishops on the role of the Movement in politics led to its expansion by increasing the Bishops on the Movement's executive from three to seven. With the extra numbers the Sydney bishops began to direct the organization. Santamaria and many of the Movement members in Victoria refused this direction from Sydney and resigned. Only Sydney and Adelaide remained on board with the new direction set by the Sydney bishops. The rest, with Santamaria in control went on to form the Catholic Social Movement in July 1956.<sup>73</sup>

The Sydney bishops went further and sought a ruling from the Vatican on the role of the newly formed Catholic Social Movement. The Sydney bishops argued that the Movement could not engage in political action with a political party and that it had "long overreached its mandate in its permeating the Labor Party."<sup>74</sup> In 1957 the Vatican, after receiving a delegation from the Sydney bishops, instructed the Movement that the "...Catholic Social Movement was to be reconstructed as an organization confining itself to spiritual and moral formation. It would be subject to the bishops..."<sup>75</sup> With this decision Santamaria wrote to Mannix that the "...latest Roman letter makes it clear that if I wish to carry on the fight against Communism, I cannot be associated in a leading capacity with any movement of lay apostolate connected with the Church. The latter quite clearly involves the resignation or removal from the Movement..."<sup>76</sup>

As a result Santamaria and the Victorian bishops reacted to the statement by resigning from the Catholic Social Movement (CSM) and creating a new body with no direct Episcopal control. This body became the National Civic Council (NCC). In fact, the activities of the NCC, free from Episcopal control, continued as they had before the

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<sup>73</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.212.

<sup>74</sup> Brian Croke, "Prelates ad Politics: The Carroll Style", *Journal of the Australian Catholic Society*, Vol. 22. (2001), p.39.

<sup>75</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.214.



Vatican intervention. In 1960, Santamaria stated that the National Civic Council was a “voluntary association of Australian citizens united for a set of specific purposes laid down in the Constitution. The immediate purpose of the organization is to conduct an organised nation-wide fight against communism in the political and trade union field.”<sup>77</sup> The Movement would continue, with the support primarily of the Victorian bishops, but without any support from the Sydney and Adelaide Catholic hierarchy.

During the 1960s, B.A. Santamaria produced a weekly 15-minute current affairs TV show called *Point of View*. This combined with his weekly column in the *Australian*, which he began in 1975, made B.A. Santamaria a well-known political commentator. One particular editor, Graham Perkin of the Melbourne *Age*, wrote to Santamaria saying: “I have read your article with a great deal of interest and congratulate you on it. I cannot remember reading a more lucid exposition of a point of view on foreign policy. I wish we had journalists who could write like this.”<sup>78</sup>

Santamaria also had several close friendships throughout his life. The first and foremost was with Archbishop Daniel Mannix whom he first met in 1937. The friendship was described by Tom Luscombe as: “The Irish ecclesiastic, confirmed in his intense Irish nationalism, and the son of Italian migrant parents both brought to their understanding of Australian affairs a certain quality of detachment, an instinctive appreciation of global concepts rather than the narrower parochialism peculiar to the more inverted Australian tradition”.<sup>79</sup> Another close friendship was with the poet James McAuley. According to McAuley’s biographer Peter Coleman, the friendship began at the time of the Labor

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<sup>76</sup> B.A. Santamaria to Archbishop Daniel Mannix, 15 August 1957, letter cited in full in Morgan, *op.cit.* p.136.

<sup>77</sup> Santamaria, *Spotlight on Santamaria*, p.13.

<sup>78</sup> Graham Perkin, Letter to B.A. Santamaria, May 3 1967, (NCC).

<sup>79</sup> T.R. Luscombe, *Builders & Crusaders: Prominent Catholics in Australian History*, (Lansdowne Press: Melbourne, 1967) p. 179.

Party split, which brought McAuley into “close association of Santamaria and into exhausting conflict with his own bishops.”<sup>80</sup>

On the home front, Santamaria, with his first wife Helen Power, had eight children: Catherine, Christina, Mary Helen, Bernadette, Paul, Robert, Anne and Joseph.

In the late 1960s, Santamaria formed the Pacific Institute, which published a journal entitled *Pacific Community*. He argued that Communism would come to our Australian shores via South East Asia and as a consequence he strongly supported the Vietnam War. His organization published the highly controversial pamphlet *Why We Fight*<sup>81</sup> where he argued that Australians needed to confront the communist threat not only in the unions but also the threat from China and South East Asia: “The dominating factor in the situation is that in the heart of the region there is in Communist China one power which is politically and militarily strong...”.<sup>82</sup> As Patrick Morgan has also included in his book on Santamaria’s letters entitled *Santamaria: Your Most Faithful Servant*: the “Pacific Institute [PI] was behind the setting up of a new political party - with strong Catholic connections, the Nhan Xa Cach (Social Humanist Revolutionary Party).... The party, helped by the PI, built up a broad alliance of professionals, academics, politicians, trade unionists and others, and set up branches. The Nhan Xa Cach party was intended to be the party to rule South Vietnam if the South won the war.”<sup>83</sup> On Vietnam, Santamaria became a strong defender of the war, wanting the Americans “anchored in the region.”<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Peter Coleman, *The Heart of James McAuley* (Connor Court Publishing: Ballan, 2006), p.58.

<sup>81</sup> B.A. Santamaria, *Why We Fight*, (Self Published: Brisbane, 1963).

<sup>82</sup> *ibid*, p.3.

<sup>83</sup> Morgan, *op.cit.* p.546.

<sup>84</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview with Robin Hughes, April 23, 1997, Australian Biography. Online transcript available from [www.australianbiography.gov.au/santamaria/intertext1/html](http://www.australianbiography.gov.au/santamaria/intertext1/html).

In the 1980s Santamaria's wife Helen died, and also at this time the National Civic Council suffered a schism in which Gerard Mercer (National Secretary of the Movement), Rocky Mimmo (Tasmanian organiser), Maurice Wagner (Queensland Industrial Officer) John McKenna (Victorian State President) and Jimmy Hewatt (Victorian Industrial Officer) were all sacked. As a consequence of the internal schism faced by the Movement, B.A. Santamaria lost the support of the unions who supported the Movement. Santamaria also tightened the management of the Movement, ensuring that the Movement remained in his control.<sup>85</sup>

After the split within the Movement, and with the loss of union support, Santamaria focussed on two new areas: the family and religion. In relation to the family, he formed the Australian Family Association, (AFA). In forming the AFA, Santamaria went beyond just Catholics, including non-Catholics as patrons as well as non-Christians and agnostics.

The Australian Family Association issued its first *Bulletin* in July 1980. It stated that its aims and objectives were: to cultivate an appreciation that the integrity and well-being of the family are essential to the stability, morale and security and prosperity of the nation; to analyse law and policies that affect the family, to support initiatives in support of the traditional family, to create public awareness of the fundamentals of the family unit and to facilitate research for the effective pursuit of its aims.<sup>86</sup> After Santamaria's death the Australian Family Association attempted to free itself from the tight control of the National Civic Council. It failed and as a consequence many strong supporters became

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<sup>85</sup> Mark Considine, "The National Civic Council: Politics Inside Out", *Australasian Political Studies Association Journal*, Vol. 20, No.1. (May, 1985), p.57.

<sup>86</sup> "The Aims and Objectives of the Australian Family Association", *The Australian Family Association Bulletin*, Vol.1. No.1. (July 1980) p.5.

disenfranchised from the Movement, including B.A. Santamaria's own daughter Mary Helen Woods and former National Secretary, Hugh Slattery.

In 1981 B.A. Santamaria wrote his autobiography entitled *Against the Tide* followed by a biography of his mentor *Daniel Mannix* in 1984. In 1987 he wrote *Australia at the Crossroads* and in 1997 he republished his memoirs *Against the Tide* with additional chapters on the state of the Church which he entitled *Santamaria: Memoirs*.

With the ever-changing values in Australian society that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s Santamaria turned his attention to the universities where he formed Democratic Clubs. The Democratic Clubs were formed in the Gramsci-style of "imbuing the institutions" (in this case, the universities) with Christian ideals and culture.<sup>87</sup> The Democratic Clubs were successful in recruiting future liberal politicians such as Tony Abbott. In 1989, B.A. Santamaria formed the Thomas More Society (later changed to the Thomas More Centre). The Thomas More Centre sought to bring together Australians from all Christian denominations to deepen their knowledge of the Christian faith. Its other aims were to strengthen the practice of their faith, to explore bioethical issues, to study political and social issues and to train a new Christian force to challenge the philosophies of utilitarianism, subjectivism, materialism and nihilism.<sup>88</sup>

Writing after his death, former editor of the *Bulletin* and biographer of *James McAuley*, Peter Coleman wrote that the future of the Movement was "up to the Thomas More

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<sup>87</sup> Martin Sheehan, Letter to the author, June 6 2007, (ACA).

<sup>88</sup> "Thomas More Society: What it is and what it isn't", *Thomas More Society Bulletin*, Vol.1. No.1. (Dec. 1989) p.1.

Centre and its 40,000 supporters.”<sup>89</sup> Of course, the Thomas More Centre did not have anywhere near as many members.<sup>90</sup>

In 1985, B.A. Santamaria along with former National Party Senator, John Stone formed the Council for National Interest “a body to promote debate on foreign affairs and defence matters.”<sup>91</sup> The Council for the National Interest held dinners, with invited guests such as Pauline Hanson’s advisor John Pasquarelli who spoke of the success of Pauline Hanson.<sup>92</sup> Other controversial speakers included maverick Members of Parliament, Graeme Campbell and Bob Katter.

In 1988, B.A. Santamaria removed the religious articles from *News Weekly* and consolidated them in a new journal of religious opinion entitled *AD2000*. It stated as its objectives in the first issue: “The establishment of a new monthly magazine of religious opinion, centring on the most critical religious issue of the day – the struggle around issues of moral and doctrinal orthodoxy understood primarily in Christian terms...”<sup>93</sup>

In the 1990s, the Movement continued to operate on several fronts. On the industrial front there was the National Civic Council, on defence and foreign policy there was the Council for National Interest, on the family the Australian Family Association, on religion *AD2000*, and in the universities the Democratic Clubs.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Peter Coleman, “Missionary Legacy of a fiery pamphleteer”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, February 26 1998, p.5.

<sup>90</sup> When I took over the running of the Thomas More Centre in 2001 I was horrified to see that the *Thomas More Bulletin* had 80 subscribers and 120 who received it as a complimentary. The Thomas More Centre Summer Schools would attract somewhere between 70 to 150 people at its peak (Australia wide). In recent years attendance has been around the 30 to 40 mark with no Thomas More in South Australia, Tasmania and New South Wales. Therefore, to have 40,000 supporters is a bit far fetched.

<sup>91</sup> John Stone, “Santamaria: An outstanding right Australian”, *The Australian Financial Review*, March 4 1998, (Newspaper Clipping).

<sup>92</sup> John Pasquarelli, “The Pauline Hanson phenomenon”, *Australia and World Affairs*, Issue 33, (1997) p.5.

<sup>93</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “The Establishment of AD2000”, *AD2000*, Vol.1, No.1 (April 1988), p.2.

<sup>94</sup> B.A. Santamaria, *The National Civic Council*, (Freedom Publishing: Melbourne, 1990) p.17.

According to Patrick Morgan, despite creating all these fronts, Santamaria's ultimate dream, unrealised, of creating a new political party caused his greatest sense of failure: "Santamaria was always searching to reform an existing party, or to create a new one..." Morgan also concludes: "The inability to form the long-hoped-for third party may account for Santamaria's persistent cry near the end of his career that he had been a failure..."<sup>95</sup>

Right to the very end, B.A. Santamaria was still laying out the Movement's strategy and in January 1998 he wrote a paper, which was eventually delivered by his son at a conference in Adelaide, which outlined the tasks for the Movement: "The third task is for us to win a 'critical mass' in support of our positions. Our organisational method depends on having a group in every electorate."<sup>96</sup>

At the end B.A. Santamaria suffered from a brain tumour, and despite an operation, he died on February 25, 1998 at the age of 82. His State Funeral was attended by one Cardinal, 12 bishops, the Prime Minister John Howard, former Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser as well as Victorian Premier at the time, Jeff Kennett, and 2000 mourners.<sup>97</sup>

B.A. Santamaria was writing articles right up until his death. It would be impossible to catalogue all his writings. It is important to ask what it was about B.A. Santamaria that he "could command the loyal support of tens of thousands of people who would labour to understand his analysis and to take that analysis to every major institution of Australian society."<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Morgan, *op.cit.* p.543.

<sup>96</sup> B.A. Santamaria, "The New Challenge" *News Weekly*, January 10 1998, p.24.

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<sup>97</sup> Tess Livingstone, "Tears and cheers for the man they called B.A.", *The Courier Mail*, March 4 1998, (Newspaper clipping).

<sup>98</sup> Kieran Ryan, "B.A. Santamaria" St. Mary's Cathedral, March 6 1998, (NCC).

### CHAPTER 3:

## WHAT HAVE THEY WRITTEN ABOUT B.A. SANTAMARIA -

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will survey writings on B.A. Santamaria and show also what has not been covered in the existing literature. Writings on B.A. Santamaria have been numerous. The challenge is to separate B.A. Santamaria from the Movement. Some works have concentrated on the Movement of which B.A. Santamaria is the principal agent, while other works have focussed on B.A. Santamaria and his relationship to the Movement. After B.A. Santamaria's death writings about him have continued, mainly concerning his relationship to the organizations he founded - although obituaries immediately following his death attempted to recapture the person rather than the organizations he founded.

Until the Labor Party split of 1954-1955, Santamaria was virtually unknown outside Catholic circles. One of the first to write about Santamaria was John Douglas Pringle. Pringle writing in *Australian Accent* in 1959 dedicated a chapter to B.A. Santamaria entitled: "Santamaria, Santamaria!"<sup>99</sup> Pringle separates B.A. Santamaria from the Movement<sup>100</sup> arguing that the groupers were too independent and were the cause of Santamaria's troubles.<sup>101</sup>

Pringle, a Scot, was the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald* during the Labor Party split. Pringle saw B.A. Santamaria as an unknown citizen of poor Italian immigrants who

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<sup>99</sup> J.D. Pringle, *Australian Accent*, (Chatto and Windus: London, 1958), Pp. 77-84.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.* p.84.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.* p.77.



worked out a plan to defeat communism in Australian society. He was according to Pringle a “brilliant young man with the remarkable energy and fertile brain...”<sup>102</sup> Yet, Pringle interprets B.A. Santamaria as an integralist who “...understood as sound only those who accepted the social and political views of the Catholic Church.”<sup>103</sup> And according to Pringle, as an integralist Santamaria saw a decadent Europe infecting the Church and that by bringing Catholic immigrants from Europe the purity of the Catholic faith in Australia would be preserved.<sup>104</sup> Integralism was a Catholic inspired movement that believed society could only take shape under the direct action of the Church.

What was unique about Pringle’s interpretation of B.A. Santamaria was his argument that Santamaria’s renewal of Catholic Australia was not founded on the current Irish Catholic surroundings but on his Italian culture. Pringle’s chapter on Santamaria also identified his Italian background as a key attribute.

Also writing in 1959 was Tom Truman, a lecturer in Political Science at the University of Queensland, who published in 1959 *Catholic Action and Politics*. B.A. Santamaria gave access to the Movement archives to Truman in order for him to do his research.<sup>105</sup>

Truman argued in *Catholic Action and Politics* that the Movement was trying to create a Theocracy in Australia, Theocracy being a government governed by a sacerdotal class.<sup>106</sup> Truman saw Denys Jackson’s Australian Catholic Truth Society pamphlet entitled: *Australian Dream* as expressing the real aim of Santamaria and Catholics in Australia. This aim was a medieval Christendom built on the Catholic Social Order.<sup>107</sup> James Murtagh in

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<sup>102</sup> *ibid.* p.76.

<sup>103</sup> *ibid.* p.80.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.* p.79.

<sup>105</sup> B.A. Santamaria to Tom Truman, March 8 1960, letter in full in Morgan, *op.cit.* p. 165.

<sup>106</sup> Tom Truman, *Catholic Action and Politics*, (Georgian House: Melbourne, 1959) p.43.

<sup>107</sup> *ibid.*

a critique on *Catholic Action and Politics* summed up this work as a “sinister picture... of the Catholic Church in Australia engaged in a secret conspiracy to subvert our democratic system and substitute a clerico-fascist regime” which bears “no correspondence with reality.”<sup>108</sup>

Tom Luscombe, unlike Tom Truman, was sympathetic to the Movement and in his book *Builders and Crusaders: Prominent Catholics in Australian History* he dedicates a chapter to Santamaria entitled: “The Controversial Layman”. Writing in 1968, Luscombe argues that “for three fateful decades, covering the 1937-1967 period, the name Santamaria, with its unmistakable Mediterranean connotations has been before us one way and another.”<sup>109</sup> According to Luscombe, B.A. Santamaria and Archbishop Daniel Mannix were outside the Australian cultural norm and together; they both brought a more European understanding of global concepts rather than the narrower parochialism of the Australian tradition.<sup>110</sup>

Luscombe like Pringle attempts to separate the Movement from Santamaria, attributing to the over-zealous members of the Movement many of Santamaria’s problems: “The Movement inevitably attracted an element whose sincerity and zeal could easily become a brand of fanaticism, spurred on by a consuming sense of mission, whipped up by the consciousness of crusade.”<sup>111</sup> Keeping in mind that Luscombe was writing in 1968, his assessment was insightful, and post 1968 events would vindicate his assessment particularly with respect to the following: “When two minority groups are absorbed in the bitter and savage in-fighting associated with getting the numbers, there is a tendency

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<sup>108</sup> J.G. Murtagh, *Tom Truman’s Catholic Action and Politics*, (Australian Catholic Truth Society: Melbourne, 1961) p.19.

<sup>109</sup> Luscombe, *op.cit.* p.177.

<sup>110</sup> *ibid.* p.179.

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.* p.187.

to lose sight of the large, amorphous, uncommitted majority which tags along displaying a seeming indifference to what is going on in the main arena.”<sup>112</sup>

Luscombe acknowledges that Santamaria’s finest fruit was the National Catholic Rural Movement. On his role in the Labor Party split, Luscombe argues that future historians will make the charge that Santamaria was responsible “for destroying the long association between the Australian Labor Party and the Catholic Church” as well as splitting “Catholics themselves into two strongly opposed camps.”<sup>113</sup>

Finally, Luscombe concludes that Santamaria was a “restless, dynamic, intelligent” man who tried to do too much in too many areas. He finished the book with the hope that if Santamaria could “extricate himself from the coils entangling him, and once more embark on positive, creative work”<sup>114</sup> then the future could hold much for him.

Paul Ormonde in 1972 published the book entitled *The Movement*. The son of Jim Ormonde who was a NSW Senator at the time of the split, Ormonde recalled the day his “Catholic” father came home and told his family that a group of boys from the local church had joined his Labor branch of the Australian Labor Party and how his father remarked: “I tell you, they are trying to take over the party.”<sup>115</sup> Ormonde has his focus more on the Movement with Santamaria as its leader. Ormonde finds the Movement as a “monster which got out of control and did incalculable damage to the credibility of the Church and to the condition of Australian Democracy.”<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *ibid.* p.191.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.* p.202.

<sup>115</sup> Paul Ormonde, *The Movement*, (Thomas Nelson: Melbourne, 1972), p.34.

<sup>116</sup> *ibid.* p.162.

Ormonde views the life of Santamaria between three wars, the Spanish Civil War, the Second World War and Vietnam war and concludes that the “persecution and harassment of the Catholic Church by the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe after the war confirmed Mr Santamaria in his belief in the totality of the conflict between the Church and Communism.”<sup>117</sup>

Niall Brennan, also during this same period, published a book on the Movement entitled *The Politics of Catholics*. A former supporter of the Movement and contributor to *News Weekly*, Brennan now went into a full on attack on the activities of the Movement.

Brennan argues that the Movement was essentially led by a “single-minded young Italian with a yen for politics, religion and crusades”. This of course is Santamaria, who led “an amorphous mass of grumbling Irish Catholics looking for a suitable Enemy to punch.”<sup>118</sup> With this image Niall concludes: “Does his [Santamaria’s] brand of passionate urgency generate the response it would in Italy? Or does he become the force which keeps them going from bad to worse over a lengthening period?”<sup>119</sup>

Brennan argues that Santamaria and the Movement made two major mistakes. The first was to establish the National Civic Council after the intervention of the Vatican in 1957. Brennan argues that this was “an affront to Church authority.”<sup>120</sup> The other was the adoption of Vietnam as a *cause celebre* for Australian Catholics, where the NCC in search of an enemy made the communists in Indo-china their primary enemy, and anyone opposed to the Vietnam War was a communist sympathiser.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> *ibid.* p.23.

<sup>118</sup> Niall Brennan, *The Politics of Catholics*, (Hill Publishing: Melbourne, 1972), p.16.

<sup>119</sup> *ibid.*

In 1970, Robert Murray published an extensive book on the Labor Party split of the 1950s called *The Split: Australian Labor in the Fifties*.<sup>122</sup> The book is a detailed account of the events of the Labor Party split and therefore Santamaria is only mentioned in the context of the events that took place during the split. The life and background of Santamaria is not explored in this book, just the events of the 1950s split.

Later on, Murray in an article entitled “sorting out the sound and the fury” argued that the Movement had no effect on the Labor Movement, while in an even later article he argues that “Santamaria really did set out to use the Movement to control Labor and if possible national politics in the name of the Catholic Church.”<sup>123</sup>

Perhaps the most important Australian Catholic Church historian was New Zealand born, Patrick O’Farrell. In his authoritative book: *The Catholic Church and Community in Australia*, O’Farrell dedicates a sub-section to B.A. Santamaria. He notes Santamaria’s characteristics such as “of Italian migrant parents”, “studied law”, etc. O’Farrell then argues: “He and the group of people associated with him, represented two phenomena in Australian Catholic lay life – non-Irishism and dedicated social enthusiasm.”<sup>124</sup>

O’Farrell then argues that “many in the movement had European rather than Irish origins; those with Irish origins thought in Australian terms.”<sup>125</sup> Later, O’Farrell reviewed Santamaria’s book *Against the Tide* where he commented on Santamaria’s personal attitude to politics as expressed in his autobiography as someone who “emerges on his own implication as far too good for... the dirty game of politics.”<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> *ibid* p.96.

<sup>121</sup> *ibid* p.99.

<sup>122</sup> R. Murray, *The Split: Labor in the Fifties*, (Cheshire: Melbourne, 1971).

<sup>123</sup> R. Murray, “Looking Back on Evatt and the Split”, *Quadrant*, Vol.XLVIII, No.10. (October 2004), online edition.

<sup>124</sup> P.O’Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History* (UNSW Press: Kensington, 1992), p.397.

<sup>125</sup> *ibid*.

Some argue that B.A. Santamaria was highly influenced by the English thinkers such as G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc. Richard Bosworth is one person who holds this view. In the *Australian People Encyclopaedia of the Nation*: edited by James Jupp, first published in 1988 and republished in 2001, Bosworth not only links B.A. Santamaria to Chesterton and Belloc but distances him from any Italian connection: "... child of southern Italian migrants, seemed more the intellectual creation of the world of 'Chesterbellocs' than of Italian Catholicism."<sup>127</sup>

Tony Ayers also takes the view that Santamaria drew his inspiration from Papal pronouncements and G.K. Chesterton and Hilaire Belloc.<sup>128</sup> Karl Schmude goes further and argues that the first issue of the *Catholic Worker* that was written by Santamaria was strongly influenced by Belloc's social thought; in its first statement of principles the statement: "We fight" was tersely Bellocian in flavour.<sup>129</sup>

Gerard Henderson, who during 1970 to 1971 worked as a part time researcher for the Movement, even coming on the National Council of the Movement from 1970 to 1974 until he lost favour with the Movement, published *Mr Santamaria and the bishops* in 1982. The book was an in-depth look at the different organizations in which Santamaria involved himself such as Catholic Action, The Catholic Social Studies Movement and the Catholic Social Movement and the tensions he caused amongst the bishops during the years 1938 to the death of Mannix in 1962.

In his work, Henderson questions the tactics of Santamaria, particularly "permeation" where the Movement people would join the ALP branches in order to effect change, to

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<sup>126</sup> Patrick O'Farrell, "Woeful Tidings: The Autobiography of Bob Santamaria", *Quadrant*, October 1981, p.15.

<sup>127</sup> R. Bosworth, "Post War Italian Immigration", *An Encyclopedia of the Nation*, J. Jupp (ed), (Cambridge University Press: Oakleigh, 2001), p.508.

the Movement's end. This of course was going well beyond just resisting and fighting the communists.<sup>130</sup> On Santamaria, Henderson concludes that at the end of the day his influence on Australian society was largely counter-productive.<sup>131</sup>

Andrew Campbell was another fortunate researcher who was given unlimited access to the Santamaria files. Campbell's thesis was entitled: "Politics as a Vocation: A Critical Examination of B.A. Santamaria and Politics of Commitment 1936-1957". The thesis is a comprehensive study of the person of Santamaria. Campbell dedicates chapter three to frames of influence: family and education. However, only one sentence refers to the Santamaria family's "peasant view of life" and very little in this chapter is dedicated to Santamaria's Southern Italian background.<sup>132</sup> Campbell concludes in the thesis that B.A. Santamaria's beliefs were derived from papal or religious principles, asserting that Santamaria was an integralist: "...he is assessed in this thesis as an integralist on the basis of the study of his belief system from his writings, speeches, political and organisational activities and from numerous interviews conducted by him, by the author."<sup>133</sup>

Marc Florio's Honour's thesis gave a somewhat different interpretation of B.A. Santamaria. Florio argued that Catholicism had not directly influenced B.A. Santamaria's thinking<sup>134</sup>. This was contrary to many "integralist" interpretations of B.A. Santamaria. Florio argues that it was B.A. Santamaria's background particularly his political theories that influenced his ideas: "the essence of BA Santamaria's complete sociological theory is clearly within the *gemeinschaft* tradition".<sup>135</sup> Florio has conceded to the author that

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<sup>128</sup> T. Ayers, "Cottage Catholicism: Young Santamaria & the Lure of the Pastoral", *Arena*, No.34. (May 1998), p.20.

<sup>129</sup> K. Schmude, *Hilaire Belloc: His Life and Legacy*, (Australian Catholic Truth Society: Melbourne, 1978), p.14.

<sup>130</sup> Gerard Henderson, *Mr Santamaria and the Bishops*, (St Patrick's College: Manly, 1982), p.173.

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.* p.177.

<sup>132</sup> Andrew Campbell, "Politics as a Vocation: A Critical examination of B.A. Santamaria and the politics of Commitment 1936-1957", Doctor of Philosophy, Deakin University, 1989, Pp. 34-43.

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.* p.439.

<sup>134</sup> Florio, *op.cit.* p.52.

<sup>135</sup> *ibid.*

Santamaria was keen for him to move away from the notion of Santamaria's Catholicism when he interviewed him.<sup>136</sup>

After his death, Paul Ormonde edited *Santamaria: Politics of Fear*. In one of the essays, Colin Thornton Smith, former academic from Melbourne who from 1956 to 1967 was a member of the editorial committee of the *Catholic Worker*, explores the young Santamaria before the Second World War. Yet, very little information on B.A. Santamaria's Italian background is recorded. His parents are rarely mentioned, as are any personalities within the Italian community including its chaplains, Fr Vincenzo de Francesco and Father Ugo Modotti from this period.

Thornton-Smith also plays down aspects of B.A. Santamaria's background. For some reason Thornton-Smith uses undisclosed sources when arguing that B.A. Santamaria was spared the "sort of trauma undergone by immigrant children..."<sup>137</sup> Thornton-Smith also downplays B.A. Santamaria's economic poverty associated with being in an immigrant family arguing that "the rewards of Joseph Santamaria's hard work as a fruiterer at 513 Sydney Road Brunswick had enabled him in 1921 to go to the considerable expense of taking his family on a visit to Italy."<sup>138</sup> Yet, family sources have shown that the return to Italy was in response to a stillborn birth to B.A. Santamaria's mother, which led to a desire of the family to sell up and return to Italy.<sup>139</sup> It was not simply a holiday for an affluent family. Nonetheless many Italian immigrant families – indeed most – would not have been able to afford such a trip, which suggests that the Santamarias were well off compared to most Italian immigrants.

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<sup>136</sup> Marc Florio, Letter to the Author, May 1 2002, (ACA).

<sup>137</sup> Colin Thornton-Smith, "The Young Santamaria and his Mentors", *Politics of Fear*, (Spectrum Publications: Richmond, 2000), p.56.



What Thornton-Smith attempts to do in this chapter is paint a picture of B.A. Santamaria as a supporter of fascism in Europe, particularly in Italy and France. Thornton-Smith does this by a method known as guilty by association since Denys Jackson is Santamaria's mentor: "...Santamaria seems to have been at some pains to deny ever having shown more than an objective scholarly interest in Italian Fascism, ever having been attracted to the thoughts of *Action Francaise* and ever having engaged in anti-Semitism. For this triple disculpation to have been true, he would have had to be opposed to the thinking of his mentor on these issues during his student years..."<sup>140</sup> Despite this claim, Thornton-Smith fails to provide any conclusive evidence from Santamaria himself as argued by one reviewer, of Thornton-Smith's article, James Franklin: "an attempt to pin anti-Semitism on Santamaria is not entirely successful. There are no actual anti-Semitic statements in his name..."<sup>141</sup>

Thornton-Smith is one of B.A. Santamaria's critics who overplay the Italian descent and culture to associate him with Italian fascism. To Thornton-Smith it is assumed that because Santamaria emerged in the period of Italian fascism then he would have certainly been of the same mind of the fascist regime or at least sympathetic. This particular problem of the cultural critic will be discussed later in my thesis.

*Santamaria: Politics of Fear* was a highly critical look at the life of Santamaria. It makes this clear in its preface: "All the contributors to this book share at least one objective: to explain why, on balance, they regarded Santamaria with serious reserve."<sup>142</sup> Its tone is summed up by its cover – designed by Paul Ormonde's wife, Marie Ormonde, which

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<sup>138</sup> *ibid.* p.57.

<sup>139</sup> Joseph N. Santamaria, *The Education of Dr Joe*, (Connor Court Publishing: Ballan, 2006), p.8.

<sup>140</sup> Thornton-Smith, *op.cit.* p.61.

<sup>141</sup> James Franklin, "Book Review: Santamaria: The Politics of Fear", *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Volume 22, (2001), p.82.

<sup>142</sup> Paul Ormonde, "Preface" *Santamaria Politics of Fear: Critical reflections*, (Spectrum: Richmond, 2000), p.11.

was described by one reviewer as childish and unpleasant: “a drawing of Santamaria with unctuous expression, washing his hands in greasy Latin style under a Roman clerical hat - a garment which as far as I know never adorned him.”<sup>143</sup> The symbolism comes with the core belief of the contributors that “Santamaria was harking back to the position of those medieval church-state theorists who argued that the Church had a ‘direct’ power over the temporal/political order.”<sup>144</sup>

Bruce Duncan’s *Crusade or Conspiracy* has been his life’s work. He set out to tackle Santamaria and the Movement head on. It is the most comprehensive study on Santamaria done from a Catholic perspective. Being a Redemptorist priest, and being supported by his religious order, Duncan has had the freedom to search Church archives across the country and in particular overseas. And yet despite such access Duncan fails to find any ground breaking or history-changing material. And its tone is negative. One feels that there is no natural justice towards Santamaria. Unlike Luscombe, who was critical of Santamaria back in 1967, but still had the decency to acknowledge some of his good work, Duncan fails to acknowledge any good qualities.

The tone of Duncan’s *Crusade or Conspiracy* is evident in the manner he selects his sources. Take for an example; B.A. Santamaria’s book *The Earth Our Mother*. Duncan writes about B.A. Santamaria’s book and then selects two reviews of this book. The first, the *Catholic Worker* review where it was reviewed “coolly; as interesting and provocative”, and the other is found in the *Advocate* where Father James Murtagh described it as “weak... on Australian realities, even reflecting utopias of our rural history and social

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<sup>143</sup> Hal Colebatch, “A Sad Little Book”, *Quadrant*, May 2001, p.81.

<sup>144</sup> Max Charlesworth in the preface to *Santamaria Politics of Fear: Critical reflections*, (Spectrum: Richmond, 2000), p.7.

psychology.”<sup>145</sup> Yet Duncan doesn’t mention positive reviews that appeared in the *Bulletin*<sup>146</sup>, *The Melbourne Age*<sup>147</sup>, the *New Zealand Tablet*<sup>148</sup> or the *Queensland Producers*.<sup>149</sup>

Duncan concludes his highly comprehensive study by drawing the following conclusions: “Some of Santamaria’s ideas were shared by much of the Labor tradition in Australia, but others remained exotic.”<sup>150</sup> Santamaria used his patronage inside the Church to silence and remove opponents and critics. Santamaria lacked a realistic grasp on international issues. Then Duncan made an interesting and negative conclusion, disguised by using the straw men argument: “A number of people mentioned to this author that Santamaria’s operation struck them like that of an Italian godfather.”<sup>151</sup> Finally, another conclusion of Duncan’s is that Santamaria “drew on his Italian culture for the values he wished to inculcate in Australia, so he drew from an older Italo-Spanish interventionist model of Church political action as he developed the Movement.”<sup>152</sup>

Yet, Duncan doesn’t explain what is the older Italo-Spanish interventionist model of Church political action and since Duncan offers no ecclesiology of different Church models, the notion of an Italo-Spanish Church model remains a mystery.

Nino Randazzo, who once stood for the Democratic Labor Party, argues in his book *Radici Eoliane: Santamaria d’Australia*, that Santamaria was about to stand for the ALP in the 1940s, but Giuseppe Santamaria was so concerned that he got Fr Ugo Modotti, Italian chaplain at the time, to convince Bob Santamaria not to stand. And by

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<sup>145</sup> Duncan, *op.cit.* p.87.

<sup>146</sup> Republished in Full in *Rural Life*, January 1946, p.13.

<sup>147</sup> *The Melbourne Age*, July 26 1945, (Newspaper clipping).

<sup>148</sup> *New Zealand Tablet*, February 25 1946, (Newspaper clipping).

<sup>149</sup> *Rural Life*, September 1945, p.16.

<sup>150</sup> Duncan, *op.cit.* p.393.

<sup>151</sup> *ibid.* p.400.

<sup>152</sup> *ibid.* p.405.

Randazzo's account Modotti was successful.<sup>153</sup> Randazzo also argues that the National Civic Council was modelled on Professor Luigi Gedda's Comitato Civico Nazionale.<sup>154</sup> Randazzo only uses secondary sources and his connection between Gedda and Santamaria is based on the similarities between the names as Gedda's Comitato Civico Nazionale translates into National Civic Committee and Santamaria called his Movement in 1957 the National Civic Council. This is also the same conclusion drawn by John Barich in his Masters thesis, that is; the names are too close to be co-incidental.<sup>155</sup>

In 2003, Ross Fitzgerald from Queensland published *The Pope's Battalions: Santamaria, Catholicism and the Labor Split*. This book is also about the Labor Party split, but Santamaria is the central character. It relies heavily on the opinions of Robert Murray, Paul Ormonde and Bruce Duncan.

Fitzgerald tries to set the record straight in favour of the Australian Labor Party. Therefore, as examples, he argues that at the Hobart Conference the exclusion of the groupers was not "illegal" even if it was immoral and if Santamaria had had his way the ALP would have been a vehicle for Catholic social policy. According to Fitzgerald, Catholic social policy was "pro-worker, pro-family, pro-agriculture and pro small business."<sup>156</sup> Why this is a problem, Fitzgerald doesn't explain.

Richard Doig looked at Santamaria from the perspective of his work with the National Catholic Rural Movement. In doing this, Richard Doig altogether dismisses Santamaria's

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<sup>153</sup> Nino Randazzo, *Radici Eoliane: Santamaria d'Australia*, (Edizioni del Centro Studi: Lipari, 2003), p.116.

<sup>154</sup> *ibid.* p.103.

<sup>155</sup> J.R. Barich, "Functions, Scope and Organisation of the National Civic Council 1957 onwards", Masters of Arts, Australian National University, Canberra, 1968, p.23.

<sup>156</sup> Ross Fitzgerald, *The Pope's Battalions*, (UQP: St Lucia, 2003), p.138.

Italian culture as nothing more than a literary creation<sup>157</sup> arguing that: “by the time Santamaria was writing, any familial connection with peasantry was at least two or three generations removed....”<sup>158</sup> Doig argues that Santamaria’s “yen for peasantry” came from his antagonistic “position in relation to the academic establishment” and that when B.A. Santamaria returned to Italy in 1980s “he avoided the poverty stricken Aeolian Isles.”<sup>159</sup> Doig argues that Santamaria like the rest of the Campions was influenced by the National Catholic Welfare Conference, founded by John Ryan SJ.<sup>160</sup>

To commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Labor Party split, Paul Strangio, Brian Costar and Peter Love edited a book entitled *The Great Labor Schism*. The book features 21 chapters with only one chapter supportive of Santamaria and the Movement.

The contributors, therefore, as a consensus argued that Santamaria was ambivalent on the issue of the separation of Church and State – the Gelasian doctrine of the two swords.<sup>161</sup>

*The Great Labor Schism* does not focus on Santamaria, but rather on his philosophy, when it came to his contribution that led to the Labor Party split. But once again very little new material is presented that hasn’t already been covered by Robert Murray, Bruce Duncan, Paul Ormonde or Ross Fitzgerald.

Patrick Morgan’s 2007 book: *B.A. Santamaria: Your Most Obedient Servant*, is a collection of Santamaria’s letters published under the careful eye of the Santamaria family. The

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<sup>157</sup> R. Doig, “A New Deal for Australia, The National Catholic Rural Movement and American Agrarianism 1931-1949”, *Rural Society*, Vol.10. No.2. (2000), pp.139-152.

<sup>158</sup> *ibid.* p.140.

<sup>159</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>160</sup> *ibid.* p.142.

book begins with the letters from 1938, and there are only a few letters prior to 1945. All these letters are to do with the work of Santamaria, and his pre-war letters only mention issues of administration when it came to Catholic Action. The post-war letters, however, are insightful, and using these letters Morgan concludes that Santamaria's Catholic faith was "a basic part of his nature, so integrated into his make-up as to require no questioning."<sup>162</sup> Morgan also points out – not found in any other author – that Santamaria expressed the need "for a third party in Australia" and his failure in doing this led to his "persistent cry near the end of his career that he had been a failure, and had achieved nothing..."<sup>163</sup>

Morgan sees his activity in the Movement and the Industrial groups as parallel with what "Catholic Action was achieving, with Vatican approval, in post-war Italy."<sup>164</sup> Therefore, without being so explicit, Morgan argues that B.A. Santamaria was a Christian Democrat of the Italian (European) tradition in Australia.

Morgan's book was commissioned by the Santamaria family and they were careful to promote their father in the best possible way. From 2000 to 2005, the author worked in the room across from where B.A. Santamaria's papers were kept. During this time, the papers were being moved to the State Library of Victoria and to Patrick Morgan who was compiling the above book. Dorothy Santamaria, widow of B.A. Santamaria, spent Wednesday afternoon going through the papers at the NCC office before the letters were passed on to the State Library and onto Patrick Morgan.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Paul Strangio and Brian Costar, "B.A. Santamaria: Religion as Politics" in *The Great Labor Schism: A Retrospective*, (Scribe: Carlton, 2005), p.215.

<sup>162</sup> Morgan, *op.cit.* p.556.

<sup>163</sup> *ibid* p.542.

<sup>164</sup> *ibid* p.533.

<sup>165</sup> I had an office next door to where Dorothy Santamaria would attend every Wednesday.

Writings on Santamaria have generally failed to understand him from an Italian-Australian perspective. Where his Italian background has been mentioned, it has always been brief and in passing. There is an acknowledgement of his Italian background, but never an exploration. His Italian parents remain a mystery, the Italian community from which he emerged is unknown and Brunswick is scarcely mentioned. The next chapter will primarily be about a Santamaria who emerged from his Italian background, his Italian parents and the suburb of Brunswick, not mentioned by other authors in the past.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **B.A. SANTAMARIA: A LOOK AT HIS LIFE WITHIN AN ITALIAN-AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK FROM HIS BIRTH UNTIL HIS MARRIAGE IN 1939**

The aim of this chapter is to explore influences on B.A. Santamaria not formally recognized in the literature. In doing this, this chapter will be an in-depth look at the life of B.A. Santamaria within an Italian-Australian historical framework from his birth until his marriage in 1939. Therefore this chapter will identify those influences prior to his marriage. These influences, be his father, the Italian community, its Italian chaplains, the suburb of Brunswick or the Christian Brothers are researched and explored as agents of influence when interpreting B.A. Santamaria. His marriage to Helen Power is the event that he ended his period in Brunswick as well as his time in the Giuseppe Santamaria household. When looking at his life, this chapter will explore his family and the community from which he emerged. This chapter will also explore certain characteristics of the Southern Italian migrant background which may have influenced B.A. Santamaria. Therefore, it will be a history interwoven with sociology.

In Patrick Morgan's edited collection of B.A. Santamaria's letters entitled: *B.A. Santamaria: Your Most Obedient Servant*, as mentioned previously, there is very little material to illustrate the young Santamaria of an Italian descent and culture living in Brunswick. Although Brunswick is mentioned in B.A. Santamaria's autobiography, *Against the Tide*, the place was hardly acknowledged by Santamaria himself, and his children or



grandchildren never ventured back to live in the suburb where the young B.A.

Santamaria grew up.

When B.A. Santamaria wrote his autobiography in 1981 he listed the following as the major influences on his life: "...pre-eminently, my parents' family and the social background from which they came; the religion in which I was raised, the education which I received..." In the following paragraphs of this chapter these three influences on Santamaria's development will be discussed, beginning with his early roots in the Aeolian Community of Melbourne and his upbringing in the working class suburb of Brunswick.

Aeolians started coming to Australia from the late 1800s. They left for Australia, the United States or South America in search of a better life. So vast was the immigration and exodus from the Aeolian Islands that by the 1950s historian Vincent Cronin predicted that the "island may one day revert to the original barren state..."<sup>166</sup>

The islands consisted of Lipari, Vulcano, Salina, Panarea, Filicudi, Alicudi and Stromboli. The islands are volcanic and the winds that surround the islands "are the most violent in the Tyrrhenian if not the entire Mediterranean."<sup>167</sup> The Islands were in close proximity to Sicily and therefore they had a history closely interwoven with that of Sicily. Like Sicily the inhabitants struggled for survival. The islanders mostly relied on pumice, vines, fishing or small plots of vineyards. The pre-history of the islands shows that they were populated by the Mycenaean peoples and then later by the Greeks who were of a Doric race. Later the Carthaginians occupied them, as the archipelago became a naval station. The Romans eventually conquered the islands and during the Christian age, Lipari became a place of pilgrimage and it was recorded by some Byzantium writers that the

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<sup>166</sup> Vincent Cronin, *The Golden Honeycomb*, (Hart Davis: London, 1954) p.25.

apostle Saint Bartholomew miraculously had landed there.<sup>168</sup> In 839 Lipari was attacked and destroyed by Moslems and it remained almost deserted until the Normans came in 1083. In 1544 the pirate Ariadeno Barbarossa ransacked the city and carried away its inhabitants as slaves. Lipari was eventually rebuilt and populated by Carlo V of Naples where from there onwards it followed the destinies of Sicily and the Kingdom of Naples.<sup>169</sup>

The Islands today have a World Heritage listing mainly because of their volcanic landforms. They survive on tourism and two recent films *Dear Diary* and *Il Postino* have highlighted their natural beauty.

When Italy was unified, the Aeolian Islands like Sicily did not reap many of the benefits, promised with unification and, as a consequence, suffered terrible hardships. It was during this period that about 2000 migrated from the Aeolian Islands. Some of these made their way to Australia<sup>170</sup> while larger numbers migrated to United States and South America.

B.A. Santamaria's paternal grandparents, Bartolo and his wife Giuseppina were born on the Island of Salina. In 1881, Bartolo left with his wife and migrated to the United States where his first three children were born.<sup>171</sup> Bartolo even became an American citizen before migrating back to Salina in 1886 where B.A. Santamaria's father Giuseppe was born in May 1886.<sup>172</sup> Bartolo then migrated to Australia in 1891 without his family who joined him in 1893. In Australia, Bartolo and Giuseppina had two more children Felicia

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<sup>167</sup> Dana Facoros and Michael Pauls, *Italian Islands* (Cadogan: London, 1986), p.203.

<sup>168</sup> C. Cavallaro, *The Aeolian Islands*, (SAGEP: Messina, 1988), p.7.

<sup>169</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>170</sup> C. Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia*, (Oxford University Press: Melbourne, 1963), p.19.

<sup>171</sup> *Ricordo del Santuario di S. Antonio e dei Fondatori*, p.385.

<sup>172</sup> Giuseppe Santamaria, "Naturalization Certificate" A.A., A1, 1929/7326.

and Rosina. Bartolo did not settle down and returned to the Aeolian Islands again then to the United States (again) before settling in Melbourne in 1909.<sup>173</sup> According to Santamaria the reason they left the United States was that they found the situation in New York so bad that they saw the “beginning of criminality....”<sup>174</sup> Therefore, even if Giuseppe Santamaria’s father came to Australia in 1893, he did not permanently settle in Australia until 1909.

B.A. Santamaria’s mother Maria Terzita Costa came to Australia in 1912, at the age of 20 to look after her two brothers, Joe and Dom Costa, who had a fruit shop in Maryborough, Victoria.<sup>175</sup> Santamaria in a later interview states the reason why their parents and grandparents came to Australia was that back in the Aeolian Islands the people were basically starving.<sup>176</sup>

The Santamaria family ran a fruit shop in Sydney Road, Brunswick. Theirs was one of three *Aeoliani* fruit shops in Brunswick. The *Aeoliani* families of Bongiorno and Canestra managed the other two shops.<sup>177</sup> There may have been other Aeolian families because B.A. Santamaria in his 1986 interview with Robert Pascoe also mentions the Lagona and Russo families as also living in Brunswick.<sup>178</sup>

There has been very little written on the Aeolians in Australia. The exception has been a graduate diploma thesis written by Maria Triaca in 1977. Maria Triaca’s Graduate Diploma researched four leading Aeolians in Australia, looking at them through their literature.<sup>179</sup> The introduction of the thesis gives a very general history and overview of

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<sup>173</sup> *Ricordo del Santuario di S. Antonio e dei Fondatori*, p.385.

<sup>174</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Interview by Robin Hughes. op.cit.

<sup>175</sup> Joseph N/ Santamaria, *The Education of Dr Joe*, (Connor Court Publishing: Ballan, 2006), p.7.

<sup>176</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Interview by Robin Hughes. op.cit.

the Aeolians in Australia. It remains an important source, particularly when many of the people interviewed were major contributors to the Aeolian Community.

What Maria Triaca found was that the Aeolians were involved in the fruit and vegetables trade and using the book celebrating the establishment of the Church of St. Anthony in Hawthorn entitled the *Ricordo dai Sant'Antonio e' dei Fondatori* as her source – which provided biographies of many Italian Catholic families at the time – she found that of the 145 Aeolian families included in these biographies in Melbourne who arrived between 1881 to 1937, one hundred of these were fruiterers.<sup>180</sup> Included in these families were the Santamarias.

The most thorough scholarly work that included the Aeolians amongst other migrants was the research carried out by Charles Price. Price in his book *Southern Europeans in Australia* found that the Aeolians like many Southern European migrants “so far from leaving lonely cottages dispersed amongst the hills, came from places where the countryside is virtually devoid of any home because the population has gathered itself together in ‘nuclear settlements’: compact residential areas of relatively small extent.”<sup>181</sup> According to Price, Aeolians were darker than those from Northern Italy and an inch or so taller “than the average Welshman.”<sup>182</sup> He also found that three quarters of the Lipari islanders who settled in Sydney and Melbourne were “mainly fruiterers.”<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> Maria Triaca, *Amelia: A Long Journey*, (Greenhouse Publications: Richmond, 1985), p.128.

<sup>178</sup> BA Santamaria, Interview with Rob Pascoe, op.cit.

<sup>179</sup> M.J. Triaca, “Italians in Australia from the Aeolian Islands: Contribution to Literature”, Graduate Diploma of Librarianship, Swinburne Institute of Technology, 1977.

<sup>180</sup> *ibid*, p.37.

<sup>181</sup> Price, *op.cit.* p.38.

<sup>182</sup> *ibid*. p.52

<sup>183</sup> *ibid*. p.162

Some of the Aeolians started off as fruit sellers and moved on to become licensed grocers - as was the case with the Santamarias, while some went into catering, like Frank Virgona in Geelong who started the ABC Café and the Favaloro brothers in Bendigo.<sup>184</sup> Another example was that of the Russos who also worked in the fruit and vegetable trade, setting up a store in Bairnsdale, Victoria. Like most Aeolian families who owned a fruit shop, it was all hands on deck with the very youngest to the very old working in the shop.<sup>185</sup>

The Aeolians in Melbourne and Sydney both began Mutual Aid Societies. In Melbourne, the Mutual Aid Society began in 1925, while in Sydney it began earlier in 1909.<sup>186</sup> Such clubs were common wherever the Italians migrated. In New York and Buenos Aires for instance, research has found that the Italians “created a variety of communal institutions for defending their rights and meeting their needs.”<sup>187</sup> The Mutual Aid Societies were common in Sicilian culture as “voluntary associations had a long history in Sicily. Craft guilds and religious confraternity had existed since the 16<sup>th</sup> Century.”<sup>188</sup> B.A. Santamaria’s father as we will explore further on was heavily involved with the Aeolian Mutual Society. In fact, he was one of the founders in Melbourne. The aim of the society based on a similar initiative in the United States was to gather “one group of all the sons of the Aeolian Island” so they got to know each other, advise and support one another.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Triaca, *op.cit.* p.39.

<sup>185</sup> Russo, *op.cit.* p.22.

<sup>186</sup> Italian-Australian Records Project, Victoria University, <http://w2.vu.edu.au/iarp/collection/clubs/>

<sup>187</sup> A. Paganoni, *Valiant Struggles and Benign Neglect: Italians, Church and Religious Societies in Diaspora*, (Center for Migration Studies: New York, 2003), p.293.

<sup>188</sup> Donna Gabaccia, *Militants and Migrants: Rural Sicilians become American Workers*, (Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, 1988), p.30.

<sup>189</sup> “Statuto Circolo Isole Eolie”, Sydney 1925, reproduced in full on the Italian Australian Records Project, [www.w2.vu.edu.au/iarp/statuto.html](http://www.w2.vu.edu.au/iarp/statuto.html)

According to B.A. Santamaria his family was poor.<sup>190</sup> His childhood was spent in two worlds. One was that of his parents and the other the working class suburb of Brunswick. In his Aeolian world, his mother passed on stories and traditions to him.<sup>191</sup> In Brunswick, there were his Catholic school friends who were both Irish and working class.<sup>192</sup>

Santamaria himself became familiar with the Aeolian Islands when he went to the Islands with his family in 1922 as a little boy of seven years. The memories of this year stayed with B.A. Santamaria and in his 1934 thesis, he mentioned the Island of Salina and its beauty: "The homely islanders cannot restrain their desire to ask the malicious question, 'What has Australia got to compare with that'."<sup>193</sup>

B.A. Santamaria's family was a Southern Italian family. It was this traditional Southern Italian family which inspired some of his ideas. In his writings he later referred to his family background as peasant. This so called peasant family, was according to B.A. Santamaria, a "highly complex and a most effective mechanism for administering those social services which have to be delivered by someone in every society" especially when it came to "the care of the very young and the very old."<sup>194</sup> In other words, the peasant family was a self-sufficient family.

The earliest studies of Italian life in Australia were conducted during the period of mass migration of Italians in the early post-war period. Although they do not discuss the circumstances of Italian immigrant life and attitudes of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the time

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<sup>190</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Interview with Professor Rob Pascoe, op.cit.

<sup>191</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>192</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>193</sup> B.A. Santamaria, "Italy Changes its Shirts", Master of Arts Thesis, History Department, Melbourne University, Melbourne, 1934, p.6.

<sup>194</sup> B.A. Santamaria, "The Breakdown of the Family", *Social Survey*, September 1977, p.229.

when the Santamaria family became established, they nonetheless reveal certain general characteristics of Italian community life, and of attitudes towards Italians.

## ITALIAN SETTLEMENT IN AUSTRALIA

Italians in Australia date back to the first fleet. Cresciani mentions Giuseppe Tusa being on the first fleet but argues that he was rather a Spaniard or a Sicilian. Cresciani somewhat indicates that being a Sicilian may not have been enough to be considered as an Italian, in particular at the time of the first fleet.<sup>195</sup> It was only from the 1850s a sizable colony of Italian migrants settled in Australia and as early as 1862 Italian migrants began to be considered in North Queensland as possible workers for the pastoralists. During this same period the Irish bishop James Quinn of Cairns also advocated for Northern Italian immigrants be brought to Queensland on a large scale to help labour shortages on the farms and canfields.<sup>196</sup> Yes, Northern not Southern Italians! In 1891, with the White Australia Policy restricting Kanakas from working on the canfields, contractors went to Northern Italy for workers. From 1891 the first batch of Italian immigrants came to Australia.<sup>197</sup>

In 1901 the states of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia, formed the federation of Australia, better known as the Commonwealth of Australia with a Constitution that came into force on January 1st, 1901. The census at the same time showed that there were 5, 678 Italians living in Australia. However, at the time of the census of the Italian Consul argued that the

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<sup>195</sup> G.Cresciani, *The Italians in Australia* (Cambridge University Press: Oakleigh, 2003) p.28.

<sup>196</sup> William A. Douglass, *From Italy to Ingham: Italians in North Queensland*. (University of Queensland Press: St Lucia, 1995) p.21.

<sup>197</sup> G. Cresciani, *Migrants or Mates*. (Knockmore Press: Sydney, 1998) p.31.

majority of the Italians were not counted as they were scattered all around the countryside.<sup>198</sup>

From 1901 to 1923, the Italian population in North Queensland grew considerably. In Brisbane the *Courier Mail* stated alarmingly in 1919 that in areas like Ingram and Innisfail there had been a change of nationality. The *Courier Mail* also claimed that the Italian invasion had begun and the 1921 census showed there were 1,831 people of an Italian background.<sup>199</sup>

Following the Second World War, Italy was in an economic crisis and to combat this problem “there was general agreement that Italians, and especially those from the South, would be best off returning to their ancient recipe of emigration.”<sup>200</sup> And so began the great post war influx of Italian immigrants to Australia and with this influx came a shift in settlement patterns from rural areas to the cities.<sup>201</sup> It was Victoria that received the most Post war Italian migrants “with an increase from 8,305 Italian born to 42,429 by 1954.”<sup>202</sup> When the 1970s came the Italian migrants stopped coming to Australia - partly due to improved economic conditions in Italy – Victoria recorded having 116,712 Italian-born migrants.<sup>203</sup>

With the onset of Italian migrants to Australia on a grand scale led to studies on them by demographers. One of the earliest studies conducted on the Italian community in Australia was by W.D. Borrie in 1953 entitled *Italians and Germans in Australia: A Study of Assimilation*. Borrie wrote at a time when the great influx of Italians was causing some

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<sup>198</sup> *ibid.* p.59.

<sup>199</sup> T.P. Boland, *James Duhig* (University of Queensland Press: St Lucia, 1986) p.216.

<sup>200</sup> H. Burley, “Post-War Italian Immigration”, *The Australian People*, edited James Jupp (Cambridge University Press: Oakleigh, 2001) p.505.

<sup>201</sup> Ilma Martinuzzi-O’Brien, “Italian-Australians and the Australian Catholic Church through War, Internment and Mass Migration”, in *The Pastoral Care of Italians in Australia: Memory and Prophecy*, (Connor Court Publishing: Ballan, 2008) p.61.

<sup>202</sup> *ibid.*



concern in some sections of the Australian community, and it is therefore not surprising that the focus of his work was assimilation. His study assumes the necessity of assimilation, and highlights the difficulties in the assimilation of Italians. It was at this time, and in this context, that BA. Santamaria attempted to promote the virtues of Italian migrants settling *en masse* on the land.

The major negative that Borrie found with the Italian migrants was that they had not been assimilated into the wider Australian community.<sup>204</sup> Borrie found that Italians persisted in maintaining ties with the country of origin and that marriage outside the Italian community was discouraged. The Italian community also had “higher reproductive habits” according to Borrie and the Italian children usually spoke English at school and Italian in the home.

Borrie also acknowledged the high self-employed element among Italians, yet by 1933 to Borrie’s horror over 40% of the Italian migrants could not read or write in English.<sup>205</sup> Borrie also believed that the lack of assimilation and the low English speaking level of the Italians were in part a symptom of their social networks which were a consequence of the migrants’ economic activity and social interests.

Borrie’s overall study and interpretation of the Italians was that their settlement was one of failure. Failure in the sense that not enough was being done to assimilate the Italians or even worse, that this type of migrant was difficult to assimilate, unlike the Germans, therefore indirectly pointing towards a preference of one type of migrant over the other. The failure of these migrants to assimilate because “of their strong attachment to their

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<sup>203</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> Borrie, *op.cit.* p.142.

<sup>205</sup> *ibid.* p.143.

homes and their families and their limited education did restrict their integration during their early years of settlement....”<sup>206</sup>

Charles Price in 1963 published *Southern Europeans in Australia*, which included a substantial look at Southern Italian migrants. Price took the assimilationist study of Borrie further by providing an explanation of the cultural methodology he recorded. His study documented the phenomenon he called chain migration, which he used to explain the concentration and lack of assimilation of Southern Europeans, of whom Italians were the most numerous. Price also acknowledged in his study that there were regional differences when looking at the Italians. Someone from the North like Piedmont who came out before the Second World War was much easier to assimilate than the Calabrian from the South of Italy who came out after the Second World War.<sup>207</sup> Price analyzed the regional origins of Italian migrants and correlated this with their places of settlement in Australia, to arrive at his theory of chain migration and its consequences of migrant settlement concentrations, which supported his argument for the lack of assimilation of Italians.

On the family, Price observes that in Australia, Southern Europeans, Italians included, had a tendency to establish independent households, following Australian patterns. In the case of the Aeolians, Price found that they settled in the fruit and vegetable industry, as was the case with the Santamarias.

In Constance Cronin’s study of Sicilians she found that the basis of the Sicilian family revolved around honour, “*onore*”, and this was found in the virginity of the young girl in the family: “since Sicilian familial honour based on the concept of feminine purity is

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<sup>206</sup> *ibid.* p.152.

retained or lost through the sexual code, marriage should be the central act which will ensure continued honour for the extended group.”<sup>208</sup> Therefore, according to Cronin, “the girls stay at home until marriage because the period from puberty to marriage is the most dangerous to her virginity.”<sup>209</sup> Price also observed that unmarried girls were not allowed out unless strictly chaperoned and as a consequence were not allowed to find employment outside the home or family farm.

Bill Hampel, however, argues that there are serious flaws in Cronin’s study as it “presents a reified, undifferentiated and static concept of society, an unquestioning acceptance of cultural pluralism and an absence of any theory about individual-group relations....”<sup>210</sup>

Another Australian study in 1986, by Luigi Favero and Graziano Tassello, found vast differences between the first wave of immigrants and the post war immigrants. In particular, with work and employment, it found that the migrants before the start of the Second World War were generally self-employed and employers, while the post war migrants were employees and worked in the area of manufacturing.<sup>211</sup> The report also found the weakening of ethnic ties after the Second World War of the mass migration of the 1950s, and 1960s, partly due to the community no longer being fed by “the migratory influx from the motherland” as well as the constant increase in mixed marriages.<sup>212</sup> The importance of this study as well as the subsequent study shows that in relation to work, there was a major difference from the pre-Second War World Italian migrant and the post-war chain-migration Italian migrant. In the case of the Santamarias they fit into the

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<sup>207</sup> Price, *op.cit.* p.6.

<sup>208</sup> Constance Cronin, *The Sting of Change: Changes in Sicilians in Sicily and America*, (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1970), p.55

<sup>209</sup> *ibid.* p.58

<sup>210</sup> Bill Hampel, “Generations and Class: Sicilian-Australians in Melbourne”, in *Ethnicity, Class and Gender in Australia*, G. Bottomley and M. de Lepervanche (editors), (Allen and Unwin: Sydney, 1984), p.166

<sup>211</sup> Luigi Favero and Graziano Tassello, “Demographic and Social Characteristics of the Italian Community in Australia and its Second Generation”, CIRC Papers, No.40, (North Fitzroy, 1986), p.13

<sup>212</sup> *ibid.*

pre war Italian migrant notion of work, which is different from the migrants in question in studies by Cronin and others.

In another study conducted by the Institute of Family Studies, Lidio Bertelli stated several characteristics of an Italian family. Bertelli's focus was on the post-Second World War Italian family, which he argues, was different "in structure, values and behaviour from the way it was thirty or more years ago."<sup>213</sup> Therefore, the family in question in Bertelli's study is not the same type of family as that of the Santamarias who were pre-Second World War. Nonetheless, Bertelli shows some clear characteristics, such as the patriarchal versus the matriarchal systems.

The matriarchal system was common in areas characterised by a "pastoral economy" as the father spent most of the time away from their home.<sup>214</sup> Another characteristic was Clientism and social control. Clientism was a "way of making sure that the powerful would help if the need arise", while occupational mobility was where the choice of career for the boys was mainly a parental decision. Finally there was also the characteristic of the sacred rule of tradition and parental authority.<sup>215</sup>

The United States studies conducted by Joseph Varacalli and Salvatore Primeggia found that the "family" was at the core of the Italian migrant communities: they concluded that "the centrality of the family for Americans of Italian heritage is an undisputed reality...."<sup>216</sup> This is consistent with the findings of the above researchers in Australia who reported the importance of the family in Italian immigrant life. The writer Anna

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<sup>213</sup> L. Bertelli, "Italian Families" in *Ethnic Family Values in Australia*, D. Storer (ed), (Prentice Hall: Sydney, 1985), p.71

<sup>214</sup> *ibid.* p.51.

<sup>215</sup> *ibid.* p.57.

<sup>216</sup> Salvatore Primeggia and J. Varacalli, "Community and Identity in Italian-American Life", *The Ethnic Quest for Community: Searching for Roots in the lonely Crowd Researching in Community Sociology*, Edited by Michael. W. Hughey and Arthur J. Vidich (JAI Press: New York, 1993), p.46.

Maria Dell'Oso gave an evocative account of the southern Italian family when she reported that the family “with all its *embroglio* and *obligazione* and vendetta and *dispetto*- is everything: *la famiglia* is the fine net of steel that supports and strangles.”<sup>217</sup>

Another important study on the Italian family was the post-war study by Edward Banfield. Banfield in his study: *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* written in 1958 introduced the notion of Southern Italians as “amoral familist” meaning that “the extreme poverty and backwardness of which it is to be explained largely... by the inability of the villagers to act together for their common good...”<sup>218</sup> The importance of mentioning Banfield's study is that it was written at a time when Santamaria was emerging in the Australian political scene and this study added further suspicion on the backwardness of the Southern Italians and their inability to assimilate and move beyond their poverty. If Santamaria promoted the settlement of Italian migrants on the land, then this study was evidence on how such a venture was doomed to fail.

Edward Banfield conducted his study much later than the period of the Santamaria family. But his study was used to support and promote negative notions of Southern Italians. Banfield conducted a field study where he, with his wife and their two children lived in a small village in the South of Italy during 1954 to 1955.

Banfield concluded in this study, through interviews largely conducted by his Italian-speaking wife, that it was the lack of association that was the major obstacle to development. Banfield found that there were no associations except for a group of 25

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<sup>217</sup> Anna Maria Dell' Orso, “Song of the Suitcase” in *Family Pictures*, Beth Yahp (editor), (Angus and Robertson: Sydney, 1994), p.129.

<sup>218</sup> Edward Banfield, *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*, (Free Press: New York, 1958), p.10.

upper class men who played cards and chatted.<sup>219</sup> The Church, according to Banfield, did not carry out charitable or welfare works and the Church didn't even play any part in the secular life of the community.<sup>220</sup> Even the political parties were minimal in the lives of the villages.<sup>221</sup>

On the family, Banfield concluded that it consisted of the father, mother and their unmarried children and the family had no morality except that which requires service to the family. This led to his conclusion that the people in Banfield's study are "prisoners of their family-centred ethos - that because of it they cannot act concertedly or in the common good" and this also according to Banfield was the "fundamental impediment to their economic" progress.<sup>222</sup>

This notion has long been disputed by subsequent historians and anthropologists as argued by Donna Gabaccia: "familism... was not the Sicilian ideal" and that "social status literally grew out of a generous network of cooperative and reciprocal (thus moral) social relations. Both men and women worked to surround their families with such networks."<sup>223</sup>

Filippo Sabetti of McGill University in Canada, has argued that Banfield's "amoral familism" is "hardly a neutral concept". Furthermore, Sabetti argues that: "Banfield ignored the presence of horizontal bonds of reciprocity, trust, solidarity and ad hoc

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<sup>219</sup> *ibid.* p.16.

<sup>220</sup> *ibid.* p.17.

<sup>221</sup> *ibid.* p.24.

<sup>222</sup> *ibid.* p.163

<sup>223</sup> Gabaccia, *op.cit.* p.31.

mutual aid and exchanges of services that went beyond relationships with one's own kin, which were and remain very much part of the local way of life."<sup>224</sup>

Sabetti also questions the methodology employed by Banfield and instead from his own research argues that "Documents in the provincial state and diocesan archives point to long-enduring local ventures as civic assets. These include Catholic confraternities and lay mutual aid societies, Socialist rural cooperatives and other long term joint efforts that successfully avoided for much its traceable history the tragedy of the commons in the joint use of the communal woodland as fuel for fire."<sup>225</sup>

More recent studies of the Italian family come from academics like Loretta Baldassar who in her book entitled *Visits Home: Migration experience between Italy and Australia* where she argues that for Italians in Australia "the establishment of one's own household at marriage..."<sup>226</sup> Furthermore, migration is a *sistemazione* connected to marriage.<sup>227</sup> Such a view is shared by Frank Panucci, Bernadette Kelly and Stephen Castles who argue that Italian-born Australians have high-rates of home-ownership.<sup>228</sup> While Mariastella Pulvirenti goes so far as to argue that "home ownership symbolizes the Australian part of the Italian-Australian identity."<sup>229</sup> Home ownership is a typical Australian dream as argued by Fiona Allan in *Renovation Nation*: "The belief that Home ownership is the foundation of a strong society is long standing in Australia."<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>224</sup> Filippo Sabetti "Democracy and Civic Culture" unpublished paper, Department of Political Science, McGill University, 2005.

<sup>225</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>226</sup> L. Baldassar, *Visits Home: Migration experiences between Italy and Australia* (Melbourne University Press: Melbourne, 2001) p.40.

<sup>227</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>228</sup> F. Panucci, B. Kelly, and S. Castles, "Italians help build Australia" in *Australia's Italians: Culture and Community in a Changing Society*, (Allen and Unwin: Sydney, 1992) p.57.

<sup>229</sup> Mariastella Pulvirenti, "Anchoring Mobile Subjectivities: Home Identity and Belonging among Italian Australian migrants", in *Inscribed Landscapes* (ed) Bruno David and Meredith Wilson (University of Hawaii Press: Hawaii, 2002) p.225.

The weakness of such studies into the Italian-Australian family is two-fold. The first the very notion of Italian is contradictory. The northern Italian is vastly different from the Southern Italian. These differences are regional so to have a general study on Italians and Italian-Australian families would fail to distinguish these vast differences. Secondly and more importantly such studies on the Italian Australian family fail to recognise the role of religion in the lives of these families and its role in the migration experience. Religion, in particular Roman Catholicism was central to the Italian migrant families, even if upon arriving in Australia religious practice was low.

We must also keep in mind that many of these studies also focus on the post war Italian Australian family. While the Santamarias were pre-Second World War Italian migrants.

It is however, a US study by Robert Orsi, *The Madonna of 115<sup>th</sup> Street*, that provides us with an understanding of family and community life within the Southern Italian, in particular the Sicilian community with the role of religion in the migration and settlement experience. Although his study is of New York rather than Melbourne, Orsi is concerned primarily with Southern Italians, and in particular Sicilians. Although the Santamarias are from the Aeolian Islands, the cultural and religious life of Sicilians and the Aeolians are closely related. Orsi's study is also valuable because he places "popular religion" at the core of his study. This popular religion of the Southern Italians, has "always proved difficult to understand and to study."<sup>231</sup> Few studies on Italians, both in the United States and in Australia have placed religion at the core of understanding Southern Italian cultural and social life.

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<sup>230</sup> Fiona Allan, *Renovation Nation* (UNSW: Sydney, 2008) p.208.

<sup>231</sup> Orsi, *op.cit.* p.xi.



Orsi uses the Latin word for house, *domus*, as a symbol to convey what he identifies as the kernel, the centre-point of Southern Italian culture, the role of the home in the value system, identified as the inter-relationship of family, religion and duty in the lives of the people of his study group in East Harlem. The concept is new, and Italian-American authors are slowly taking up the concept of *domus* as well and fine-tuning the Orsi concept. George de Stefano, for example, in his research on the *Mafia in the Minds of Americans* also uses the *domus* arguing that “the immigrants replicated, to the best of their ability in a strange land, the family system they had known. At the center of this system is the *domus*, a concept referring to the family itself and to the physical home...”<sup>232</sup>

The overwhelming insight that Orsi offers in his study of the Italian immigrants in Italian Harlem was that the source and meaning and morals of these families were found in the *domus*.<sup>233</sup> In the *domus*, their relation to the *domus* overpowered individuality. The claims of the authority within the *domus* were strict, hierarchical and total where the elders demanded submission and complete obedience.<sup>234</sup>

The key characteristics of Orsi’s concept of the *domus* could be found in the areas of “work”, “the role of women”, “the eldest son”, “self-sufficiency” and “religion”. Added to this were the social networks of the Southern Italian families, particularly those of the Aeolians. In fact, Santamaria’s earliest development of social and political thinking rested on his experience of these characteristics within his family and the Aeolian community of which they were a part. The Santamaria family was self-sufficient and when the depression came B.A. Santamaria saw the unique benefit of his family structure. The Santamarias survived the depression because “... of the incredibly hard work of our

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<sup>232</sup> G. De Stefano, *An Offer We Can’t Refuse: The Mafia in the Mind of America*, (Faber and Faber: New York, 2006) p.30.

<sup>233</sup> Orsi, *op.cit.* p.75

<sup>234</sup> *ibid.* p.113.

parents...” and as Santamaria recalled “..it was a matter of one for all and all for one.....”<sup>235</sup> A healthy self-sufficient family could absorb any future economic crisis, hence the basis of his political thinking.<sup>236</sup>

As in the United States, Southern Italians who came to Australia had been mainly farmers in Italy.<sup>237</sup> Once in Australia many came to be employed in family firms and in unskilled labour. But here we have a major difference between those Italians who came after the war and those who came before. While, in general, both the pre-Second World War and the post Second World War migrants were economic migrants, coming to Australia to seek a better employment opportunity for themselves, but especially for their children, the economic conditions between these two periods created different work patterns.<sup>238</sup> Those who came before the Second World War started their own businesses, mainly because there were few jobs, while the post war migrants became employees in manufacturing, as there was demand thanks to an economic boom.

Work to the Italian migrants was their way of life and it involved the whole family. Work, in fact, entailed the extension of family life. This was one of the reasons for the high number of Italians who were self-employed.<sup>239</sup> The Santamaria family fitted into this category. The small business that was the work of the Santamarias was a family affair. All the Santamaria children worked in the family shop, including B.A. Santamaria.<sup>240</sup> Those with businesses, worked because of the benefits to the family and as such they were in most cases successful<sup>241</sup> and, as argued by Price, “the high rates of involvement in small

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<sup>235</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.6.

<sup>236</sup> This is not an original observation, Vincent Moleta comes to the same conclusion: Moleta *op.cit.* p.452.

<sup>237</sup> Gans, *op.cit.* p.122.

<sup>238</sup> Rev. L. E. Styles, “Migrants in the Workplace”, *Journal of Industry*, Vol. 38, (February 1970), p. 21-23.

<sup>239</sup> Vasta, *op.cit.* p.147.

<sup>240</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.5.

<sup>241</sup> Jack Collins, “Cappuccino Capitalism: Italians and Small Business in Australia”, (Kuring-gai College of Advanced Education: Sydney, 1989), p.23.

business among southern Europeans [was linked] to the peasant striving for self-sufficiency and for an independent estate that could be handed down from generation to generation.”<sup>242</sup> In looking at Sicilians in the US, Donna Gabaccia found that they “operated countless small shops and stores.”<sup>243</sup>

There was another reason. The Italian involvement in small business could also be the result of Italians being shut out of employment in many large businesses. Hence they found their own work and made their own living. After the war there was a shortage of labour in the new industries, and then Italians were accepted in employment in big companies.<sup>244</sup>

Work was also a male pursuit especially pre- Second World War, although many women, especially after the Second World War were to work in small businesses as well as factories.<sup>245</sup> Women looked after the learning of children as well as the house. Writing in *Against the Tide*, B.A. Santamaria demonstrates: “The work of a fruit shop was extremely hard. The shop would open at 7am when my father returned from market, which, three days a week, meant rising at 2am. It would close at 11pm, after the emptying picture theatre, a little way up the road, had sent a few home-going customers into the shop.”<sup>246</sup>

<sup>247</sup> Despite some criticism labelled at B.A. Santamaria during the years at Melbourne University, such as he never worked in a real job,<sup>248</sup> B.A. Santamaria continued with his duties at home taking his turn in his father’s shop.<sup>249</sup> In time Santamaria followed most

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<sup>242</sup> Jock Collins at el, *A Shop Full of Dreams: Ethnic Small Business in Australia*, (Pluto Press: Leichhardt, 1995), p.46.

<sup>243</sup> Donna Gabaccia, *Militants and Migrants: Rural Sicilians Become American Workers*, (Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, 1998), p.101.

<sup>244</sup> Pascoe, *op.cit.* p.125.

<sup>245</sup> Gans, *op.cit.* p.129.

<sup>246</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.5.

<sup>247</sup> T. Gucciardo and L. Bertelli, *op.cit.* p.23.

<sup>248</sup> Terry Monagle, “Bob Santamaria, Fish and Chips, ASIO and Democracy”, *Overland*, No.151. 1998, p.151.

<sup>249</sup> Santamaria. *Against the Tide*. p.5.

Italian Australians born and bred in Australia who moved upward into more professional and white-collar positions than was the case with their parents.

There is no doubt that Santamaria saw “work” and family as being inter-connected and the ideal business was the “family-owned business”,<sup>250</sup> which was what most migrant businesses were. Visiting Italy in 1997 Santamaria found “an enormous profusion, of, not only family farms, but family individual enterprises... all based on family ownership.”<sup>251</sup> Therefore, to the Southern Italian family, work-, which involved the entire family, was central to the Southern Italian way of providing a future for their children in their new land.

An understanding of the role of women in Southern Italian culture is important in appreciating B.A. Santamaria’s background. A recent study conducted by the Catholic Italian Resource Centre described the role of the mother in the Italian family, as one “where the mother is entrusted with the welfare of the children while the husband spends long hours away from home due to work commitments.”<sup>252</sup> Married women were also the guardians of traditional mores and they dominated the life of the home.<sup>253</sup> The Santamaria family conformed to these patterns. The importance and even sacredness of the mother is a powerful Southern Italian trait.<sup>254</sup> According to Orsi the “private power of women in the *domus* was manifest to the community in the figure of the Madonna”.<sup>255</sup> Orsi also observed that mothers “were the centers of power and authority in the household”; they dominated the life of the house. However, Orsi argues that the

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<sup>250</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Interview by Robin Hughes. *op.cit.*

<sup>251</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>252</sup> Tonina Gucciardo and Oriella Romanin, “Someone’s Mother, Someone’s Wife: The Italo-Australian Woman’s identity and Roles”, Catholic Italian Resource Papers, No.54. Fitzroy, 1988, p.6.

<sup>253</sup> Orsi, *op.cit.* p.131.

<sup>254</sup> L. Bertelli “Italian Families” found in *Ethnic Family Values in Australia*, ed. Des Storer, (Prentice Hall: Melbourne, 1985) p.53.

<sup>255</sup> Orsi, *op.cit.* p.211.

powerful women of the community “were expected to show an absolute respect for their husband and sons in public, even though everyone in the community knew that such subservience was theatre.”<sup>256</sup>

The mother was a woman of respect and this was certainly the case in many Italian-Australian households. Santamaria’s brother recalls as a child going shopping with his mother where she would enter a store and “the salesmen would hasten to find a chair” for their mother, giving her close attention as “she always commanded courtesy and kindness...”<sup>257</sup>

Santamaria always maintained the role of the woman was as mother and in the home: “I believe that its normal – you know what I mean by the word normal – that the male should normally be the breadwinner, the woman should be the nurturer and the carer....”<sup>258</sup> This notion of roles according to Santamaria was found in the “kind of family I grew up in. My father had a shop. He was in charge of the shop. My mother was in charge of the domestic economy.”<sup>259</sup>

To Santamaria the traditional role of women was as mothers and homemakers and the males as breadwinners.<sup>260</sup> His writings on the policies and economics of the family therefore followed two important premises: the need for a family wage where the breadwinner (a male) would earn enough of a wage or salary to sustain himself and his entire family; the need for policies that encouraged women to remain at home.<sup>261</sup> The family wage, of course, was common policy at the time of Santamaria’s youth but the

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<sup>256</sup> *ibid.* p.133.

<sup>257</sup> Joseph N. Santamaria, *The Education of Dr Joe*, (Connor Court Publishing: Bacchus Marsh, 2006), p.16.

<sup>258</sup> B.A. Santamaria interview with Robin Hughes, op.cit.

<sup>259</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>260</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>261</sup> *ibid.*

notion of the importance of the family wage declined as gender equality grew in the workplace.

Another important role of women in the Southern Italian household was that they were seen as the “cultural custodians of Italian culture and tradition.”<sup>262</sup> This was also the case in the United States.<sup>263</sup> Another important role in the Southern Italian household was the role of the oldest son who according to Orsi “was the dominant male in the household...”<sup>264</sup> B.A. Santamaria was the oldest son in his household. The role of the father apart from being a breadwinner was also to provide an “essential role model for his sons”, in particular the oldest son.<sup>265</sup>

In a work of anthropology entitled *Brothers and Sisters: The Order of Birth in the Family*, Karl Konig makes the following observation: “in primeval times, the first-born child did not even belong to the parents. It was considered to be the property of the divine being....”<sup>266</sup> Konig also found that the first-born was the defender of tradition and a defender of the family. But moreover, the first child was the go-between his or her parents and the rest of the siblings.<sup>267</sup> For a child of migrant parents, this go-between went further and many first born became brokers between their parents and the wider community.

In *Against the Tide*, B.A. Santamaria mentions his role as eldest son: “As the eldest son, I was expected to take my daily turn in the shop. This went on for years, until well after I began my studies at Melbourne University.”<sup>268</sup> It was a role he understood from his

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<sup>262</sup> Ellie Vasta, “The Italian-Australian Family: Transformations and Continuities” in *Families and Cultural Diversity in Australia*, edited by R. Hartley, (Allen and Unwin: St Leonards, 1995) p.159.

<sup>263</sup> Orsi, *op.cit.* p.131.

<sup>264</sup> Orsi, *op.cit.* p.117.

<sup>265</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>266</sup> Karl Konig, *Brothers and Sisters: The Order of Birth in the Family*, (Rudolf Steiner Publications: New York, 1963), p.36.

<sup>267</sup> *ibid.*, p.46.

<sup>268</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.5.

parents and according to his daughter Mary Helen Woods, a role he understood well: “Visits to our grandparent’s home in West Brunswick were frequent. Our grandparents relied on Dad enormously and he took his responsibilities as their eldest son seriously. Such responsibilities had started early in his life....”<sup>269</sup>

Maria Alfaci who wrote about her parents Nino and Maria in the book *Savage Cows and Cabbage Leaves* writes in the period of Santamarias: “Soon her second child is born, and Maria is ecstatic. A son! What joy! Nino will be so proud. A daughter is one thing, but a son brings a mother ‘rispetto’ and ‘onore’... .Maria has done her duty, she has produced a son.”<sup>270</sup>

In B.A. Santamaria’s thesis written in 1934, Santamaria explains his understanding of the relationship between the father and his eldest son: “And the Italian family is not ruled democratically.... The son looks to his father for advice in the more difficult problems, which face him, and almost invariably, he follows his advice, confident that his elder’s experience is the best security he has. It is doubtful whether the old Roman spirit of discipline has anywhere survived to the extent it has in the Italian family.”<sup>271</sup> The oldest son’s authority was important as fathers and sons frequently engaged in bitter competition for authority in the household.<sup>272</sup> Fathers in the *household* remained aloof and formal, acting as emperors.<sup>273</sup>

The tension of the oldest son comes more into play with B.A. Santamaria’s role within the *domus*. As the oldest son, it was the expectation that he would carry on the family business and eventually replace Giuseppe Santamaria as the head of the *domus*. But in the

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<sup>269</sup> Mary Helen Woods, “All in the Family”, *The Weekend Australian*, February 28 1998, p.17.

<sup>270</sup> M. Alfaci, *Savage Cows and Cabbage Leaves*, (Hale & Iremonger: Alexandria, 1999), p.40.

<sup>271</sup> Santamaria. “Italy Changes its Shirts”, p.8.

case of B.A. Santamaria this was somehow bypassed and the task went to his second oldest son Felix.

The notion of being self-sufficient was consistent with many immigrant Italian cultures. In California, for example, a study of the Occidental area found that the Italian migrants who migrated during 1880 to 1920 strived for self-sufficiency once they owned the land.<sup>274</sup> In Australia, self-sufficiency was linked to home ownership, known as *sistemazione*, which literally translates to “be established.” This was a direct response to the “exploitation in the hands of large land-owners” in Italy.<sup>275</sup> Once in Australia, this drive for “sistemazione”, was a drive to settle and to establish a permanent abode or way of life. Part of that was a desire for self-sufficiency best manifested in home ownership.<sup>276</sup>

Anthony Galt observed that on the Aeolian Islands, the people on the islands value “being a self sufficient individual operating in a world of self-sufficient nuclear families...”<sup>277</sup> B.A. Santamaria and even his brother Joe Santamaria found that the self-sufficiency of the family was crucial to withstand all sorts of economic hardship. Dr Joe Santamaria, B.A. Santamaria’s brother, for example, recalls visiting Naples in the 1990s and on the way to the Island of Capri took a taxi where they engaged in a conversation with the taxi driver: “Bob asked him about the economic situation in Naples where we knew there was a high unemployment rate. The taxi driver acknowledged this. We then

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<sup>272</sup> Orsi, *ibid.* p.118.

<sup>273</sup> Orsi, *Ibid.* p.120.

<sup>274</sup> Paola A. Sensi-Isolani, “Tradition and Transition in a California Paese”, *Italian Immigrants in Rural and Small Town America*, (Italian-American Historical Association: New York, 1987), p.95.

<sup>275</sup> Mariastella Pulvirenti, “The Morality of Immigrant Home Ownership: gender, work and Italian-Australian sistemazione”, *Australian Geographer*, Vol.31., No.2. 2000, p. 238.

<sup>276</sup> *ibid.* p.243.

<sup>277</sup> Anthony H. Galt, “Carnival on the Island of Pantelleria”, *Ethnology*, Vol. 12, 1973, p. 337.



asked, 'how do the people manage to survive?' He merely shrugged and replied, 'we help each other within the family.'<sup>278</sup>

Throughout his life B.A. Santamaria argued for the self-sufficiency of the family in which the family rather than the State was to provide services for the young, sick and the elderly. The State's role was to support the family in its carrying out of its duties.

Contrary to this philosophy were the structural changes in society: "absorption of women in the workforce, annual number of divorces, etc, all led to the problem where the family could no longer physically sustain its social services responsibility."<sup>279</sup> On another occasion, Santamaria writing about Italian families stated that the family "... exists for the protection of infants, the education of the young, and the care of the old – husband and wife in a life-long union, being trustees of the enterprise. It comes before the State and can do these things better than the State. What other people leave to social service departments, the Italian intuitively does for itself."<sup>280</sup>

In the 1950s Santamaria felt that self-sufficiency for Italian migrants meant giving migrants some land, even if it wasn't the greatest of land, but with his belief in the self-sufficiency of the migrant and the notion of a family farm, he shared a confidence that it could work.<sup>281</sup>

Another fundamental characteristic of the Southern Italian family was according to Orsi "Southern Italian popular religion gave voice to the despair of men and women long oppressed."<sup>282</sup> It was central to the Southern Italian way of life.

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<sup>278</sup> Joseph Santamaria, *op.cit.* p. 7.

<sup>279</sup> B.A. Santamaria, "The Cost of Social Services", *Social Survey*, Volume 32, No.9. October 1983, p.263.

<sup>280</sup> Santamaria, *Point of View*, p.221.

Best selling author Morris West once wrote that the faith of the Italians is “deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, most deeply here in the South.”<sup>283</sup> While Melbourne priest Franco Cavarra has argued more locally that the “Australian Catholic tradition is characterised by a no-nonsense, no frills, joyless attitude to religion. Religion is a painful duty. Italians demand and insist that their experience of the infinite moves them emotionally.”<sup>284</sup> Italian Catholicism according to one sociologist provided an excellent balance to the “Irish-dominated institution that was, among other things, Jansenistic, too clerically controlled, overly imbued with an emphasis on the active virtues, and too nationalistic.”<sup>285</sup> A particular characteristic of South Italian Catholicism was the role of saints seen as a supernatural extension of the family.<sup>286</sup>

Fundamental to the Southern Italian in Australia was that he is devoutly Catholic with a strong devotion to the Saints. In the case of the Aeolians in Australia, their devotion was to Saint Bartolomeo (B.A. Santamaria’s Christian name is Bartolomeo). It was in this context that Santamaria attended the local Catholic school and parish in Brunswick.

In the case of B.A. Santamaria, as we shall explore, his religion was a mixture of Southern Italian Catholicism and the strict Jansenism of the Irish Australian Catholic community. The Irish Australian influence was introduced to Santamaria by his Christian Brothers’ education. Irish Catholicism in Australia was an important religion that was shaped by two major events in Ireland. They were the great Irish famine and the arrival of Bishop Cullen to Ireland. Bishop Cullen not only reformed the Church in

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<sup>281</sup> See chapter five for a detailed explanation. Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.52.

<sup>282</sup> Orsi, *op.cit.* p.219.

<sup>283</sup> Morris West, *Children of the Sun*, (Pan Books: London, 1964), p.110.

<sup>284</sup> Franco Cavarra. “Bread and Roses” *The Catholic Worker*, May 1985, p.5.

<sup>285</sup> J.A. Varacalli, The Saints in the Lives of Italian-American Catholic: Towards a Realistic Multiculturalism. *Forum Italicum*. Issue 14, 1999, p.247.

<sup>286</sup> Joseph Varacalli. “As the Saints (Apparently) Go Marching Out: Why Study them”, *Forum Italicum*, No.14. 1999. p.5.

Ireland but also consolidated a devotional revolution. He also chose the first generation of Irish bishops for Australia, including his nephew Cardinal Moran.<sup>287</sup>

As in Australia, Orsi's study of New York found that "official Catholic observers criticized Italian religiosity for being exotic and pagan."<sup>288</sup>

Another important characteristic is what Donna Gabaccia terms as the occupational group and social networks. In Sicily according to Gabaccia, "shoemakers counted many shoemakers among their kin, while shepherds had many kin who herded animals too."<sup>289</sup> Such groupings were the "result of Sicilian preference for marriage partners of the same *condizione*."<sup>290</sup> In Australia, in the 1950s study of the Italian community, Borrie found these occupational economic groups an obstacle to assimilation: "The segregation of first-generation Italians was due... to the nature of their economic activity.... The economic factor was also properly a force sustaining the segregation of Italians ... which generally did not bring them into competition with organised labour, nor yet into social and cultural contact with a cross-section of the dominant society."<sup>291</sup> Yet this was not the case with the Santamaria family and many Aeolians. Economic factors and family ties meant that the majority of the Aeolians were in the fruit selling business in their early days in Australia. However this did not spell segregation for Aeolani, but the reverse, as they were scattered across suburban and country Victoria, and their customers were mostly Anglo-Australians.

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<sup>287</sup> Edmund Campion, "Irish Religion in Australia", *The Australasian Catholic Record*, January 1978, p.4.

<sup>288</sup> Orsi, *op.cit.* p.xi.

<sup>289</sup> Gabaccia. *op.cit.* p.169.

<sup>290</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>291</sup> Borrie, *op.cit.* p.145.

Orsi found in his study that Italian Mutual Aid Societies “gathered together to provide some... benefits and to socialise.”<sup>292</sup> The societies also according to Orsi enabled the immigrants “to remember and preserve traditional customs in the new world.”<sup>293</sup>

Santamaria himself advocated various forms of occupational groups, or networking, in many of his ideas. For example in the Manifesto of the National Catholic Rural Movement, he argued that “the principles of true co-operation... can be the salvation of the farming class.”<sup>294</sup> Like his father, Santamaria had been brought up in the tradition of Italian co-operation and fraternity.

It was the combination of these five characteristics that set Santamaria on his way to developing his social thinking. Later in life, Santamaria argued that his ideas came from his Italian peasant upbringing. If this is the case, then it was a culture that was focused on work, which was interwoven in the life of the family, which strove for self-sufficiency. It was also a culture that was Catholic, in which the roles such as the mother, the father and the oldest son created a tension in the home. In Chapter 8, when looking at the institutions founded by B.A. Santamaria, all promoted these characteristics.

## GIUSEPPE SANTAMARIA

In defining the Italian-Australian family, the role of the oldest son and his relationship to his father is crucial. No closer bond or identity could have existed than B.A. Santamaria would have had with his father. Looking at Santamaria’s autobiography, *Against the Tide*, one cannot help to see the tension and importance of this relationship.

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<sup>292</sup> Orsi, *op.cit.* p.51.

<sup>293</sup> *ibid.*

B.A. Santamaria mentions his father several times in his autobiography. These brief recollections of his father typify the tensions between the migrating generations and the second-generation intent on climbing the social ladder and challenging the authority of the *domus*.

Ironically his father is not recorded in the index. This is despite his presence in the first two chapters of the book. The stories in *Against the Tide* are about Giuseppe Santamaria's Marxist friend Tony Lanassa whose son was to be baptised only if Giuseppe Santamaria was godfather and the child be named Francis Marx.<sup>295</sup> B.A. Santamaria also mentions his father in the context of his paternal grandfather who was a "friendly if venerable figure to whom I generally fled in the not-infrequent moments of tribulation at the hands of my father."<sup>296</sup>

B.A. Santamaria recalls his father only having "five years of formal education..." and that his father and family survived the harsh years of the depression because of the "extraordinary hard work, probably beyond the capacity of most Australians then and now."<sup>297</sup>

His father also had vices as B.A. Santamaria recalled in an interview to Robert Pascoe: "He was an inveterate gambler and loved playing poker at the Italian club". The gambling was worst during the years 1931-1936, the years that B.A. Santamaria was studying, as he recalled to Robert Pascoe. In fact, his father would play poker two nights

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<sup>294</sup> B.A. Santamaria, *Manifesto of the National Catholic Rural Movement*, (ACTS: Melbourne, 1940), p.26.

<sup>295</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.7.

<sup>296</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.6.

<sup>297</sup> *ibid.* p.5.

a week.<sup>298</sup> Also in the same interview with Robert Pascoe, Santamaria noted that “we used to go to the races a lot.”<sup>299</sup>

Giuseppe Santamaria somehow by-passed his oldest son B.A. Santamaria for the role that was in place for him as oldest son, that of continuing in the family business. Perhaps it was because of B.A. Santamaria’s talent, with the hope was that he would instead be a successful lawyer. But, B.A. Santamaria recalled his father’s disappointment when he decided to work for Catholic Action rather than continuing with his law degree: “When I went to my father and told him, by way of consolation, that my initial invitation was only for two years I expected a difficult discussion. For a person who could be strong and obstinate in opposition, he put up surprisingly little.”<sup>300</sup>

What is remarkable about Rob Pascoe’s interview with B.A. Santamaria in 1986 was B.A. Santamaria’s understanding of his role, as the oldest son, in the Sicilian culture. In this interview, B.A. Santamaria continually highlights his role as the oldest son when speaking about the relationship with his father: “The interesting thing is Italian fathers – Aeolian in particular – if their son contradicted them, they would pretty soon call them to order...”. Further on in answering the question: “So what made you different from the younger members of the family - your siblings”? B.A. Santamaria answered “...just that I was the eldest and Italian fathers lean to their eldest.”<sup>301</sup>

In B.A. Santamaria’s 1997 interview he was pressed often by the interviewer Robin Hughes about his father. B.A. Santamaria, as usual held back, but he did recall that his

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<sup>298</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview with Robert Pascoe, op.cit.

<sup>299</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>300</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.4.

<sup>301</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview with Robert Pascoe, op.cit.

father was a “typical peasant” who was “physically strong” and “quick tempered”<sup>302</sup> and as already stated he was also a “terrible gambler”. Santamaria also noted that his father was “highly opinionated” and “his opinions would often vary very much from ours, because ours were worthless.”<sup>303</sup>

Santamaria recalls his table conversations initiated by his father: “he would always use the table to try to get my sister, who came after me, and myself, to discuss public matters with him....”<sup>304</sup> In another interview he recalled that the “... interesting thing about him was that even when I was a lad of about five, he would always set up discussions around the table on some international question about which he obviously knew little and I knew less – looking for a discussion with me to talk about these things...”<sup>305</sup> Further on in the interview B.A. Santamaria continues: “If he started a discussion on politics or international affairs... and I got excited and contradicted him he wouldn’t tell me to keep quiet....”<sup>306</sup> The significance of these conversations is yet to be explored, but their relevance cannot be overstated. B.A. Santamaria mentions these dinner conversations with his father in several interviews. In the later years, B.A. Santamaria himself would demand that his fellow senior staff of the National Civic Council must have lunch together to chew the fat on current affairs. Not joining Santamaria at the lunch table meant disloyalty and the lunchroom was for men only.

On his father’s politics, Santamaria gives away very little. He argues that his father’s interests were social rather than political “and centred on family values, including the importance of patriotism to the land of adoption and land of origin.”<sup>307</sup> The evidence

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<sup>302</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview by Robin Hughes, op.cit.

<sup>303</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>304</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>305</sup> B.A. Santamaria interview with Rob Pascoe, op.cit.

<sup>306</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>307</sup> Campbell. op.cit. p.35.

shows that Giuseppe Santamaria was very political in nature, as well as being a highly patriotic individual. This patriotism was for Italy. In fact after the death of his fourth child, who died at birth, Giuseppe Santamaria sold up shop and took his family back home to Salina. Unlike many who have interpreted this as a family holiday<sup>308</sup> this was, in fact, return migration.<sup>309</sup> However, upon returning to Salina, Giuseppe Santamaria found that it wasn't tenable for his young family and therefore gave Australia a second chance.<sup>310</sup>

Back in Australia, Giuseppe Santamaria quickly engaged anyone who attacked his homeland as is evident in the following letter to a local councillor:

I did not fail to notice in the 'Brunswick and Coburg Gazette'... that you are reported to have said at the meeting of the Brunswick council last Monday: 'The Prime Minister was going about the country, talking about Reds and Soviets and at the same time allowing thousands of Dagos to come to this country ...' Now as an Italian living here for over 35 years, I think I have the right to give you an answer. First of all, I would like to advise you to avoid insulting people of another nation and particularly an Allied Nation when you make reference to local politics.... I ask you... to pay suitable respect to Italy and Italians who with their hard work give a very high example to everybody. What Italy has done for mankind has not been done by anybody else.<sup>311</sup>

It is no surprise that such important facts about Giuseppe Santamaria do not come from B.A. Santamaria but from his sister Josephine Santamaria who later married Vin McGrath. (It is also important to note that the McGraths remained in the Northern suburbs of Melbourne).

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<sup>308</sup> James Griffin, "The Santamaria Legacy", *Eureka Street*, April 1998, Pp.25-26.

<sup>309</sup> Josephine McGrath (nee Santamaria) "A Personal and Family History"- self-published, October 1991.

<sup>310</sup> Moleta. *op.cit.* Pp. 450-451.

<sup>311</sup> Joseph Santamaria, letter to Councilor J. Hudson, December 12 1928, (Copy provided to the author by J.N. Santamaria).



The extent of Giuseppe Santamaria's involvement with the Italian community is not mentioned at all in *Against the Tide*. There may be good reason for not mentioning his father's involvement. In fact, when I interviewed B.A. Santamaria, he assured me that he had no recollections and his father was too busy to be involved in any Italian activities. But the evidence found that Giuseppe Santamaria was an active member of the Italian community as well as being one of the foundation members of the Italian-Australian journal *Voce D'Italia*, the Voice of Italy.<sup>312</sup>

*Voce D'Italia*, the "Voice of Italy" began in Melbourne in 1919. The remarkable thing about the newspaper was that its editors were non-professional migrants. The committee for the paper included Giuseppe Briglia, Domenico Boffa, G. Carra, V. Ricco and B.A. Santamaria's father, Giuseppe Santamaria.<sup>313</sup> For a man who had no formal education his central role in founding a paper is extraordinary.

*Voce D'Italia*, claimed to be a patriotic as well as a non-political newspaper. Yet, how can one remain politically neutral and yet patriotic? In its first editorial it stated that this newspaper was the voice of the homeland and the courier of the Italians in Australia.<sup>314</sup> It claimed to be non-political, despite continually publishing articles on politics. It stated in one such article that the: "above title [Bolshevism] must not make afraid the readers of *Voce D'Italia* and to reassure them, I at once declare that I will not take side in politics, and will neither condemn nor praise Bolshevism."<sup>315</sup> The paper was also admittedly hostile to Austria with numerous attacking articles. This was understandable since Italy had fought the First World War primarily against Austria.<sup>316</sup> But its tones were similar to those made by the founders of fascism in Italy. These tones were based on an unjust

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<sup>312</sup> *Voce D'Italia*, April 10 1919, Front page.

<sup>313</sup> *Voce D'Italia*, April 10 1919, p. 6.

<sup>314</sup> *Voce D'Italia*, April 3 1919, p.6.

outcome for the Italian nation after the First World War. The claims were similar to calls by Italian poet, Gabriele D'Annunzio, who, using shock troops, reclaimed a part of Italy, Fiume, which had been promised to Italy after the First World War.<sup>317</sup> Another tone of *Voce D'Italia* was the love of the *patria* (the homeland) and the importance of acknowledging Italy's Roman empire. Once again, there were similarities with Mussolini who continually referred to Italy's glories of its Roman past.<sup>318</sup> The paper was, of course, before the rise of Fascism. Yet, it echoed the sentiments of Italians at the time prior to the rise of Mussolini: the discontent of the Italian liberal governments, the injustices of the First World War and the ever growing sentiments of Italian pride. These were expressed in *Voce D'Italia*, as they were being expressed at the time in Italy. In Italy these sentiments gave way to the rise of Fascism.

*Voce D'Italia* was written not only for a small Italian migrant community but also for the wider audience. It wanted to promote Italian culture among the Australian population. It was therefore produced in Italian with an English translation of the main articles on the back pages. It also had an Italian grammar lesson on the front page for those wishing to learn the language. The population of the Italian community during this period was less than 8000 people Australia wide. It was a very small pool of people for a journal to build around. The number of illiterate Italian migrants did not help this. The paper ceased to publish just two years after the release of its first issue. *Voce D'Italia* was not to make the impact which later Italian Australian newspapers were to achieve. It did assemble sentiments that were to take form in fascism. At the heart of this venture and of these sentiments was Giuseppe Santamaria.

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<sup>315</sup> *Voce D'Italia*, November 27 1919, p.15.

<sup>316</sup> *Voce D'Italia*, May 8 1919, p.5.

<sup>317</sup> John Pollard, *The Fascist Experience in Italy*, (Routledge: London, 1998), p.26.

Later in 1936, when B.A. Santamaria attempted his own journal, it is worth acknowledging Fr James Murtagh's account. The reason for its inclusion is the not so absent role of Giuseppe Santamaria in its first production and distribution: "The first issue was printed on an over-worked press in a small, suburban printery of a Melbourne industrial suburb in January 1936. The edition was mailed from a grocery store next door, owned by the father of the editor."<sup>319</sup> Santamaria's account also includes his father: "We printed only 3000 copies of the first issue, believing that number would greatly exceed actual sales. We distributed it using my father's bull-nosed Fiat."<sup>320</sup> It is also worth noting that Giuseppe Santamaria owned an imported Italian car! In 1997, Santamaria also recounted how it was his father who loaned him the money to start *Freedom* in 1943.<sup>321</sup>

Giuseppe Santamaria was an important member of the Aeolian Society, becoming its president in 1931 and in 1948,<sup>322</sup> but more importantly he was also a member of the Italian club, Club Cavour. This club became the basis of evidence against some of the Italians when Italy entered the war in 1940, which led to their internment. In 1940, according to the Australian Authorities, if you were a member of Club Cavour, you were sympathetic to fascism. Giuseppe Santamaria was not only a member but also a committee member<sup>323</sup> and as late as April 1940, Giuseppe Santamaria was nominated to lead the fascist group, named Gino Lisa, that met regularly at Club Cavour. The problem with this report was that the name "Santamaria" was translated as "Santa Maria" and the authorities had no idea to whom they were referring.<sup>324</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> *ibid.* p.123.

<sup>319</sup> James G. Murtagh, *Australia: The Catholic Chapter*, (Sheed and Ward: New York, 1946), p.215.

<sup>320</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.17.

<sup>321</sup> B.A. Santamaria interview by Robin Hughes, op.cit.

<sup>322</sup> Triaca, op.cit. p.63

<sup>323</sup> Roland S. Browne (Inspector, Investigation Branch) to G.S.O. (M.I.) Southern Command, April 1 1940, A.A., MT269/8, 501/600. Browne, had Mr G. Santamaria as G. Santa.

<sup>324</sup> *ibid.*

Earlier in 1933, Giuseppe Santamaria posed alongside other members of the *fascio* outside St Ignatius Richmond. Present in this photo was Fr Vincenzo de Francesco, Italian Chaplain. The inclusion of de Francesco in the photo would date the picture in the early days of Italian fascism where many Australians regarded it neutrally. Also present in the photo was the Italian consul Antonio Grossardi, Genese Triaca and the Mattei Brothers.



**Giuseppe Santamaria is in the third row and in the middle with the very black moustache.<sup>325</sup>**

In the *fascio* of Melbourne, its secretary Mr Genese Triaca for the celebration of the commemoration of the March of Rome by Mussolini, greeted those gathered with the words “Mr Consul, Black shirts, Italians...”. In his speech he gave a report of the Melbourne *fascio* – *Gino Lisa*, which “had numerically and spiritually increased” and “taking the role of its true guide towards the high ideals which form the passion and

the life of the Italians of Benito Mussolini.” Its goals according to Triaca were to “oppose that process of assimilation” which would “make our children strangers to ourselves.” And to help “needy fellow countrymen.”<sup>326</sup> According to Ginese Triaca, the past thirteen years of the group was a success because of the help in this task of fascist renewal by “Giannini, Briglia, Dr Spierani, Santa Maria, Boggio and engineer Vaccari”. It is beyond doubt that the Santa Maria was in fact B.A. Santamaria’s father Giuseppe Santamaria. Once again the authorities have mistyped his father’s name.

So the evidence towards Giuseppe Santamaria shows him as a supporter of fascism and a member of the *fascio*, who according to B.A. Santamaria: “was a member of the local *fascio*... [But] wouldn’t have had any political ideas relating to that at all, but it was to be an Italian....”<sup>327</sup> As a member of the *fascio*, Santamaria would have been discouraged from becoming a naturalised British citizen. Giuseppe Santamaria was naturalised as early as 1922.<sup>328</sup>

Another interesting story about Giuseppe Santamaria told to us by B.A. Santamaria is that his father began going to Mass because he liked the Irish, not Italian, curate Fr Patrick Gleeson: “...and he suddenly decided to go to Sunday Mass in about 1931, and I do not recall his ever being absent after that time. It was about then that an impressive young Irish curate, Fr Patrick Gleeson, was stationed at St. Ambrose.”<sup>329</sup> It’s hard to see why B.A. Santamaria’s father would have started going to Mass because of the young priest Fr. Gleeson, the young Irish curate<sup>330</sup> when, at this time, the Italian community had a devoted and dedicated Italian chaplain, Fr Vincenzo De Francesco. Father de

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<sup>325</sup> Photo: State Library of Victoria.

<sup>326</sup> G. Triaca, Copy of a Speech in Italian to the Fascio of Melbourne, November 3 1935, translated L.G. Briggs, A.A., C320, SFA6.

<sup>327</sup> B.A. Santamaria interview by Robert Pascoe, op.cit.

<sup>328</sup> Application for Certificate of Naturalization. February 7 1922. A.A., A1, 1929/7326.

<sup>329</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.7

Francesco wrote about his determination in getting people to attend Sunday Mass arguing that the Italians were good people with few vices, one of them being their inability to attend Sunday Mass. In his short time de Francesco had successfully managed to get many of the Italian men to attend Sunday Mass. B.A. Santamaria himself recalls de Francesco's sermons bringing his mother to tears. It may have been de Francesco not Fr Gleeson who brought Giuseppe Santamaria back to Mass?

The problem with Giuseppe Santamaria is that a case could be put that his association with the Melbourne *fascio* meant that he was committed. The reason for this was that the vast majority of Italians were simply not involved in any way or another with the *fascio*. Involvement meant that you were a part of the 6% of Italian migrants who were involved in fascist activities. A report presented to the authorities investigating the extent of fascism in Australia came to this conclusion: "the fascist menace in Australia as portrayed by sensational newspapers, is non-existent and merely a laughable bogey.... Only 6% of the Italians in Australia are regarded as fascists." <sup>331</sup>

Despite this there is no real evidence to show that the *fascios* in Australia were anti-British, violent or disruptive to the Australian way of life. It is also important to note that only a small percentage of Italian migrants were actually involved. Giuseppe Santamaria was a part of this small percentage and his involvement could have co-incided with the "oldest son" characteristic of Southern Italian-Australians. The fascist aim was to oppose that process of assimilation that would make children strangers to their parents. Therefore, fascism provided a remedy to the distancing of B.A. Santamaria from the culture of his parents. Interestingly, according to B.A. Santamaria, it was at this time that

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<sup>330</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>331</sup> W.W. Monahan, Commonwealth of Australia- undated circa early 1940, A.A., ST2476/20, 16, (1940).

his father got a “bee in his bonnet” about his Italian speaking skills and got him to “learn proper Italian” at the Club Cavour.”<sup>332</sup>

Reading into the relationship between B.A. Santamaria and his father, it could be argued that a shift took place. The father figure of Archbishop Daniel Mannix replaced Giuseppe Santamaria. The Irish replaced the Italian. The shift is consistent with the moving away from the Italian culture and its baggage and a moving away from Brunswick. It was also a moving away from the responsibility and duties of being the oldest son in the Santamaria *domus*. That obligation, in turn, was passed on to Felix Santamaria, who continued in the family business and in the *domus*.

## OTHER INFLUENCES FROM B.A. SANTAMARIA’S YOUTH

The Santamaria family belonged to a small close-knit community in Brunswick and at the time of B.A. Santamaria’s childhood the Italian families numbered about 300 in Melbourne.<sup>333</sup> They were hardworking “with drunkenness and dishonesty a rarity” according to the Italian chaplain at the time.<sup>334</sup> The Santamarias lived at 213 Sydney Road, Brunswick: “It was three doors from the Brunswick town hall” and the house had three rooms upstairs with the fruit shop on the ground floor with the children sharing one room.<sup>335</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview by Robert Pascoe, op.cit.

<sup>333</sup> Fr V. de Francesco to the RP. Provinciale, July 2 1923. op.cit. p.94.

<sup>334</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>335</sup> B.A. Santamaria interview by Robin Hughes, op.cit.

In 1924 the family moved to Melville Road, West Brunswick which according to Dr Joe Santamaria was just beyond the tram terminus and was a relatively recent residential development “with many open spaces.”<sup>336</sup>

Despite his early days in Brunswick, B.A. Santamaria only makes a few references to it. Where it is mentioned it is in relation to the depression: “In the very hard Brunswick of the Depression period, we survived, when so many of the parents of my school associated lost everything...”<sup>337</sup> and “no one who lived in the industrial environment of Brunswick, as I did, could overlook the disastrous consequences of the unemployment which has ravaged the suburb...”<sup>338</sup> Another story mentioned in Santamaria’s biography were the early communist meetings in Brunswick: “One of the products of the depression in Brunswick was the creation of a local branch of the Communist Party. Opposite St Ambrose’s Church, there was the mechanics institute, with its diminutive strip of lawn, which used to serve as a tiny Hyde Park for public meetings. It was only a stone’s throw from our shop, so that not infrequently I listened to speakers of the Central Unemployed Committee, most of whom I was later to discover were party members.”<sup>339</sup>

Speaking in 1964 to the Jewish community in Melbourne, B.A. Santamaria recalled Brunswick in a speech about racial intolerance: “... I know what racial prejudice is. I lived my boyhood in the industrial suburb of Brunswick, of which my recollections are generally very pleasant. But not uniformly so. To not a few, I was just a ‘Dago’. I

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<sup>336</sup> Joseph N. Santamaria, *The Education of Dr Joe* (Connor Court Publishing: Bacchus Marsh, 2006) p. 9.

<sup>337</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.6.

<sup>338</sup> *ibid.* p.4.

<sup>339</sup> *ibid.* p.7.



resented this less than the thought that my parents, who were so outstanding as parents and as citizens, were just ‘Dagoes’ too.”<sup>340</sup>

In his 1986 interview with Pascoe, Santamaria is a little more forward saying that Brunswick was “almost completely Australian, in the sense of Anglo-Saxon” and that it was poor and that “all the people with whom I went to school were the children of industrial workers.”<sup>341</sup>

Ted Egan, author of the *Paperboy's War*, who lived down Sydney Road in Coburg and recalled the same period as B. A. Santamaria, writes about the protestant kids from the local state school: “Then she’d be on, ‘yonnies’ [rocks] flying, and them chanting at us: Catholic dogs, jump like frogs, In and out the water logs; to which we’d reply: States, states, ring the bell, All the Proddos go to hell.”<sup>342</sup> B.A. Santamaria’s brother sheds more light on Brunswick recalling visits to Queens Park and day trips to the shopping centre where the family would travel via a horse drawn passenger vehicle.<sup>343</sup>

As Egan and Santamaria have indicated, Brunswick was a working class city. During the 1920s and 1930s, hosiery and textile factories were moving in and in 1928 its population had reached 58,000. The 1930s saw the brick and clay industries go into decline with the old quarries being filled in and turned into parks and reserves.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>340</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “Nazi, Communists, Catholics and Jews”, *Twentieth Century*, Vol.19, Spring 1964, p.7.

<sup>341</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview with Robert Pascoe, op.cit.

<sup>342</sup> Ted Egan, *The Paperboy's War*, (Kerr Publishing: Balmain, 1993), p.9.

<sup>343</sup> Joseph Santamaria, op.cit. p.16.

<sup>344</sup> From the Brunswick Community History Groups: online resource: [www.bcgh.com.au](http://www.bcgh.com.au).

The Brunswick area was to become the highest concentration of Italian in Australia and it was for this reason that the Santamaria family business thrived.<sup>345</sup>

Later in life, B.A. Santamaria had very little to do with Brunswick, although Mary Helen Woods does recall visits to her grandparents.<sup>346</sup> Bernard Santamaria, younger brother of B.A. Santamaria, remained in Brunswick, even becoming an important member of the Brunswick Juventus Soccer club. But the Santamarias of Brunswick and the Santamarias of the Eastern suburbs grew apart and in different worlds.

Furthermore, there is one such story about one of B.A. Santamaria's married children approaching their father about their intentions of moving back to Brunswick. B.A. Santamaria's reaction was priceless, persuading or begging this person not to reconsider returning to Brunswick.<sup>347</sup>

Other important characters of B.A. Santamaria's days of Brunswick were the Italian chaplains, Fr Vincenzo de Francesco and Father Ugo Modotti.

Fr Vincenzo de Francesco's significance within the Italian community (not mentioned in any of B.A. Santamaria's writings) cannot be overstated. In fact, when de Francesco returned to Italy in 1934, Archbishop Daniel Mannix himself remarked about him stating that de Francesco knew every Italian family in Melbourne.<sup>348</sup> Even as late as 1969 when a history was put together about St Ignatius Richmond, a special tribute to de Francesco was recorded where it stated: "The list of those priests is a long one, too long to record here, but there is one name we feel cannot be left unmentioned, Fr Vincenzo de

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<sup>345</sup> Des Storer. "Italians in Australia: A Social Overview." In *Mosaic or Melting Pot: Cultural Evolution in Australia* (Harcourt Brace, Melbourne: 1979) p.29.

<sup>346</sup> Mary Helen Woods, "The Family Behind the Man" *News Weekly*, March 21 1998, p.9.

Francesco, an Italian Jesuit who came here from Naples in 1921 to serve the spiritual needs of the great number of Italian-speaking Catholics of Melbourne. He was attached to the Richmond parish and during his years here, worked unceasingly and tirelessly for his beloved Italians. For them he was a true father, to whom they could turn with confidence in all their troubles, spiritual and temporal.... The memory of his goodness and kindness is still fresh in the minds of many of our parishioners...”<sup>349</sup>

As a child Bob’s family was close to the Catholic Church as well as the Italian chaplains who worked in Melbourne from 1919 to 1945. Bob’s brother Joe Santamaria speaks about their presence: “We became intensely more aware of our Catholic Faith, not because our older siblings were involved in university encounters but because of our upbringing and the solid grounding we all received at school. From 1921 to 1934, the Italian Community was well served by the Jesuit chaplain, Fr. Vincenzo de Francesco, who was domiciled at St. Ignatius Richmond.”<sup>350</sup>

Fr Vincenzo de Francesco who was Italian chaplain in Melbourne from 1919 to 1934, was born in Messercola, Caserta, in 1885 and entered the Jesuits in 1900, going to Sicily to study philosophy. It was after doing military service during 1919-1920 that he was sent to Australia for the purpose of caring for the Italian migrants of Melbourne.<sup>351</sup>

Upon arrival in Australia in 1919, de Francesco found that his first contacts with the Italian Community were not at all encouraging: “they looked on me with suspicion and mistrust, and were curt with their questions: ‘What are you planning on doing? Why did

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<sup>347</sup> Brendan Rodway, letter to the author, June 6, 2007, (ACA).

<sup>348</sup> *The Advocate*, June 21, 1934, p.14.

<sup>349</sup> *St Ignatius, Richmond, Victoria*. (Self-Published: Richmond, 1967), p.11.

<sup>350</sup> Joseph Santamaria, “Assimilating in the 1930’s”, Dante Alighieri Society Lecture. April 30 2002.

<sup>351</sup> David Strong sj, *The Australia Dictionary of Jesuit Biography*, (Halstead Press: Richmond, 1999), p.81.

you come?”<sup>352</sup> Despite this, de Francesco became regarded as a dedicated and hardworking friend of the Italian community. One such story of his dedication was with the arrival of the Italian liner in 1927 the *Re D'Italia*. For its arrival he produced a little booklet followed by a range of activities that led to all finding employment.<sup>353</sup>

During this time de Francesco closely associated himself with the Italian community at all levels, from blessing the fascist banner at the Temperance Hall in Melbourne to working with the homeless.<sup>354</sup> He also was concerned about the anti-fascists who were “socialists and anarchists” as well as being northern Italians.<sup>355</sup> His other major pre-occupation was mixed marriages. This was unheard of in Italy and this problem overwhelmed de Francesco.<sup>356</sup>

De Francesco wrote about his time in Australia in a series of letters to his provincial which was published by the Jesuits in Naples. In the letters of de Francesco there is no mention of B.A. Santamaria. There is a good reason for this as B.A. Santamaria would have been an adolescent by the time de Francesco left Australia in 1934. But de Francesco certainly knew the family as one particular picture of Italian men outside St. Ignatius shows de Francesco with Giuseppe Santamaria in a patriotic pose.<sup>357</sup>

Only in two interviews, one conducted by the author and the other by Professor Rob Pascoe, did B.A. Santamaria recall Father de Francesco. His recollections of de Francesco, however, are only limited. B.A. Santamaria recalls meeting de Francesco in the late 1920s and that de Francesco was different from the Irish style of priest and also

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<sup>352</sup> Fr Vincenzo de Francesco, letter to R.P. Provinciale, July 2, 1923, *op.cit.* p.40

<sup>353</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>354</sup> *The Advocate*, March 29 1928, p.13.

<sup>355</sup> Fr Vincenzno de Francesco, letter to R. P. Provinciale, October 8 1928. *op.cit.* p.323.

<sup>356</sup> Fr Vincenzo de Francesco, letter to P. R. Provinciale, August 15, 1926. *op.cit.* p.309.

<sup>357</sup> See picture on page 63.

“different from the Aeolian.”<sup>358</sup> It’s a strange statement to make as de Francesco was a Southern Italian and in reality more similar to the Aeolian than the later Northern Italian chaplains that were to work with the Italian community. De Francesco also had spent many years in Sicily. But his recollections of de Francesco are limited to his preaching. On one instance he recalled to the author that de Francesco would always bring his mother to tears with his sermons.<sup>359</sup> Another story about de Francesco’s preaching that Santamaria recalled was how he would laugh with his sister when “at a particular moment in the sermon the people would just fall on their knees. They were greatly moved and so on.”<sup>360</sup>

De Francesco was also very close to distant relatives of the Santamarias – the Virgonas who had a café in Geelong called the ABC café. In his letters to his provincial, de Francesco recalled how they made the best coffee in Australia and how he would specifically travel to Geelong to visit Frank Virgona the proprietor. De Francesco was also close to Fr William Hackett, who was a later influential person in the formation of B.A. Santamaria.

De Francesco did not, however, have any problems in supporting fascism in Australia. In his defence, it could be argued that it was fascism’s early days and therefore de Francesco, like many of his country folk didn’t know or appreciate the extent of fascist violence and brutality. But de Francesco also shared the view of the Church at the time, which was one of confusion. Fascism was tolerated by the Church because it was a bulwark against the real foe: Communism, as argued by John Pollard in his book: *The Vatican and Italian Fascism: A Study in Conflict*: “In the midst of the turbulent, tormented

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<sup>358</sup> B.A. Santamaria interview with Robert Pascoe, op.cit.

<sup>359</sup> B.A. Santamaria interview with the Author, op.cit.

<sup>360</sup> B.A. Santamaria interview with Robert Pascoe, op.cit.

and almost apocalyptic world, far from the view of the Vatican, Fascist Italy seemed to be a haven of hope, peace and tranquillity and a bulwark against Communism...”<sup>361</sup>

Such was the charisma of de Francesco that when he left for Naples in 1934, Archbishop Mannix and the Jesuits along with the Italian Community organised a farewell concert. According to Mannix so highly regarded was de Francesco that he knew well all the Italian families,<sup>362</sup> one can assume including the Santamarias.

Another important contribution to the development of B.A. Santamaria came with the education provided by the Christian Brothers. According to O’Farrell “from their first arrival in Melbourne in December 1868 until 1920, 162 Irish Christian Brothers came to Australia.... The Christian Brothers’ Irish experience had taught them that strict discipline, methodical teaching, extraordinary hard work and devotion to examinations produced academic results, and they applied that lesson vigorously in Australia.”<sup>363</sup> O’Farrell also notes that the Christian Brothers promoted a Catholicism “that was suspicious of and defensive towards the outside world.”<sup>364</sup>

B.A. Santamaria first went to St Ambrose Primary School and then to the Christian Brothers in North Melbourne in 1926. In 1928 he moved to St Kevin’s and matriculated in 1930 at age 14.<sup>365</sup> Santamaria himself wrote about his time with the Christian Brothers “my six years at St Ambrose... introduced me to the Christian Brothers” and he writes: “I will not say that it was always a pleasant experience, since some of the Brothers carried discipline to excess....” but “they imparted a level of secular learning which on the record

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<sup>361</sup> J. F. Pollard, *The Vatican & Italian Fascism: A Study in Conflict*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1985), p.188.

<sup>362</sup> *The Advocate*, June 21 1934, p.14.

<sup>363</sup> O’Farrell, *op.cit.* p.354.

<sup>364</sup> *ibid.* p.355.

<sup>365</sup> R. Stewart, *The Spirit of North, 1903-2000*, (St Joseph’s College: North Melbourne, 2000), p.50.

of results in public examinations was second to none.”<sup>366</sup> With religion, Santamaria writes “they inculcated a set of religious moral values which sustained generations in their belief as Christians. To their lasting credit, they insisted that faith must be validated by reason, placing a high premium on the intellectual foundations of both religion and morality.”<sup>367</sup> There is no doubt that much of Santamaria’s lasting religious zeal which turned into an anti-communist zeal was born from the Christian Brothers education.

B.A. Santamaria’s younger brother, Joseph Santamaria, when reflecting on his education, does not mention the Christian Brothers at all, he only mentions the education by his parents: “They imparted a large dose of normative education which was intuitive and had been quietly acquired from one generation to the next and could be applied across cultural differences and even harsh environments.”<sup>368</sup>

Andrew Campbell in his thesis on Santamaria argues that the Christian Brothers were the link between his parents and Archbishop Mannix.<sup>369</sup> Santamaria also recounts that through the depression he had a crisis of faith, but this was saved in part due to the Christian Brothers: “It was then when, as a result of the sufferings which the Depression inflicted on so many of our friends in Brunswick, I felt serious religious doubts for the first time, the religious training imparted by the Christian Brothers gave me the resources to handle my problem...”<sup>370</sup>

According to Janet McCalman in her book *Struggle town: Public and Private Life in Richmond 1900- 1965*: “The depression was the overwhelming fact of working class life.... It was

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<sup>366</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.8.

<sup>367</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>368</sup> Joseph N. Santamaria, *The Education of Dr Joe*, (Connor Court Publishing: Bacchus Marsh, 2006), p.19.

<sup>369</sup> Campbell, *op.cit.* p.38.

<sup>370</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.9.

both a private and a communal affliction and like a cancer it poisoned and debilitated the entire body corporate.”<sup>371</sup>

The depression became a defining moment in Santamaria’s life, an event he clearly remembers as his political awakening.<sup>372</sup> Mentions of the depression in *Against the Tide* are linked with the self-sufficiency of the family: “In the very hard Brunswick of the Depression period, we survived, when so many of the parents of my school associates lost everything they had. We survived because of the incredibly hard work of our parents....”<sup>373</sup> Describing the depression later on in his life, Santamaria recalled that although the money was very short, “somehow we were never lacking good food.”<sup>374</sup>

Right to the very end of his life B.A. Santamaria predicted another 1929 stock market crash. In 1987, for example, following the minor stock market crisis, B.A. Santamaria strongly believed something much worse than 1929 was only around the corner<sup>375</sup> and this belief he held to the very end and was noted by former Labor Senator, Clyde Cameron writing after his death: “for the past 18 years Bob Santamaria has been warning that the whole of the Western financial system would face a major crash.”<sup>376</sup>

1922 saw the coming of Fascism to Italy with Benito Mussolini’s famous March on Rome. Fascism was to last until 1943, when its leader Benito Mussolini was deposed by his own fascist Council after suffering heavy losses during the Second World War and having allied troops land in Sicily. Therefore, the most formative years in Santamaria’s life were the years that Fascism was in power in Italy and this has led to speculation that

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<sup>371</sup> Janet McCalman, *Struggletown: Public and Private Life in Richmond 1900- 1965*. (Melbourne University Press: Carlton, 1984), p.152

<sup>372</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “The Relevance of the Social Encyclicals”, *Thomas More Bulletin*, Vol.3, No.4. October 1991, p.1.

<sup>373</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.6.

<sup>374</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview with Robin Hughes, op.cit.

<sup>375</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “The Black Monday: Collapse in Retrospect”, *News Weekly*, November 18, 1987, p.16.



Santamaria must have been a supporter of fascism. Santamaria, aware of this problem, always defended himself by stating that he was never sympathetic to fascism and that he supported in Italy those who had opposed fascism such as Don Luigi Sturzo and Alcide de Gasperi.<sup>377</sup>

Santamaria wrote his thesis on the rise of fascism in Italy in 1934. The thesis, of course, has brought with it speculation about Santamaria and fascism. When the author interviewed B.A. Santamaria in 1995 and asked to have a look at the thesis, B.A. Santamaria stated that he did not have a copy and did not know where a copy could be found. When in 1999 – after Santamaria’s death – I began working for Santamaria’s organization, I found several photocopies of the thesis in the office. I enquired why B.A. Santamaria had denied its existence in the office, the answer was that B.A. Santamaria was quite selective on who could and who could not read his thesis.

Therefore, one is sympathetic with those who have speculated about the fate of the 1934 thesis. But then there is the case of Dr Giorgio Venturini (who needs no sympathy) who wrote the following in a peer-reviewed journal in 1998:

After a lengthy correspondence and phone calls... this author could not establish where Santamaria’s thesis is, or whether it still exists or whether it ever existed.... Professor Emeritus J. Griffin redirected the author to Dr.X. who wished to remain anonymous. Dr.X. saw the thesis and “in absolute confidence” yielded the following information on the phone to this author. The thesis does exist... Was Santamaria a Fascist agent? We don’t know, as his BA Honours thesis is still out of reliable sight....<sup>378</sup>

Of course reading the thesis one finds very little support for Mussolini or even fascism. This is in the face of mixed messages in Melbourne from politicians and Churchmen on

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<sup>376</sup> Clyde Cameron, “Those Old Labor Values: Where have they Gone?”, *News Weekly*, March 21 1998, p.8.

<sup>377</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Letter to Bill Hayden, May 25, 1994, letter cited in full in P. Morgan, *op.cit.* p.513.

Fascism at the time of the 1934 thesis. Ted Egan also in his book recalls this conflicting and often confusing attitude towards fascism among the Catholic community of Melbourne:

Indeed, the entire world was in turmoil, with a lot of concern about the antics of this fellow Adolf Hitler. There had also been vague mutterings about the Italian leader, Mussolini, who had invaded a place called “Albania”, but nobody was quite sure where that was: there was confusion with Abyssinia, which the Italians had also invaded. But as we hadn’t heard of either place they didn’t matter all that much to us. We didn’t know how to take “Musso”, as he was invariably called. Was he a fun figure or a fair dinkum rogue? The Pope was Italian, so they were sort of “on our side” as Catholics, even though we felt free to call Italians (other than the Pope of course) “dagoes”. But the Germans were different.<sup>379</sup>

According to Santamaria, 1936 was the turning point for fascism in Italy: “I think that the decisive turning point in the period of Mussolini’s regime in Italy was about 1936. And prior to that, however, when I heard the almost unanimously disparaging remarks about the march on Rome and so on, I often thought that it was all very well, if you were English...”<sup>380</sup>

In Australia through the promotion of the Italian Consular Officials and a few dedicated migrants fascism and fascist groups were formed. But the Italian involvement in Australia was not on the same level of commitment as was the Nazi party in Australia.<sup>381</sup> Italian fascism in Australia was embraced by a few, but ignored by most. In a report submitted to Australian authorities – days before Italy’s entry in the war – it was found that only 6% of the Italian population was actively attending fascist meetings.

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<sup>378</sup> Giorgio Venturini, “B.A. Santamaria – An Agent of influence”, *Convivio*, Vol.5. No.2. October 1999, p.138.

<sup>379</sup> Teg Egan, *The Paperboy’s War*, (Kerr Publishing: Balmain, 1993), p.52.

<sup>380</sup> B.A. Santamaria. interview Robin Hughes, op.cit.

<sup>381</sup> Margaret Bevege, *Behind Barbed Wire: Internment in Australia During World War II*, (University of Queensland Press: St Lucia, 1983), p.60.

Father Thomas Augustine Johnstone found fascism co-existed alongside *italianita* and he defined *italianita* as "Italian feeling and Italian sentiments, [which] does not mean anything political."<sup>382</sup> Father T.A. Johnstone gave his definition under oath at the Alien Tribunal hearing of the internee Salvatore Pante. Having closely observed the Italian community in a close and personal way in Werribee he was confident in his definition of *italianita*.

*Italianita* was a cultural manifestation and a sort of patriotism. Regardless of their attendances at fascist celebrations, which incidentally were mainly organised by the Italian consular officials, the vast majority of Italian migrants were "apolitical."<sup>383</sup> Most Italian migrants were economic migrants and upon leaving Italy were now committed to Australia. Claudio Alcorso, an Italian migrant, attests to this stating that "apart from a handful of declared fascists... Italians had migrated to Australia to improve their status in life and had no intention of returning to Italy..."<sup>384</sup>

Gianfranco Cresciani, in his book entitled *Fascism, Anti-Fascism and Italians in Australia 1922-1945*, also attests to the half hearted approach to the ideology of fascism shown by many in the Italian community: "they [Italians] all declared themselves Fascists, while in fact they were not; they all raised their hands in the Fascist salute and applauded at the right moment, in effect they were indifferent".<sup>385</sup>

Robert Pascoe in his book *Buongiorno Australia* also states that "most Italo-Australians were ideologically uncommitted, but accepted allegiance to Mussolini as the price they

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<sup>382</sup> Father Thomas Augustine Johnstone, Aliens Tribunal of Salvatore Pante, May 13 1941, A.A., MP529/3, Pante. S.

<sup>383</sup> Maria Mantello, "Werribee at War", *Melbourne Historical Journal*, Vol.14, 1982, p.106.

P. Delmastro, "The Sammarinese in the 1920s and 1930s", Conference Proceedings of Italians in Australia, Melbourne, 1986, p.49.

<sup>384</sup> Claudio Alcorso, *The Wind you Say*, (Angus and Robertson: Pymble, 1993), p.18.

<sup>385</sup> G. Cresciani, *Fascism, Antifascism and Italians in Australia, 1922-1945*, (ANU Press: Canberra,1980) p.158.

would pay for remaining within the shelter of the immigrant community.”<sup>386</sup> Regarding the activities of the Club Cavour, an Italian social club where the *fascio* resided, Sir James Gobbo argues, "it was no secret that the Cavour Club for a while had a fairly political flavour but, for the vast number of the participants there was no ideological commitment".<sup>387</sup> Finally, in Werribee, the local non-Italian population apparently did not know of any fascists during this period. James Phelan at an Aliens Tribunal in 1941 illustrates this by his answer to the following question: "Are you surprised to learn that [Salvatore] Pante [the Italian whose case was being heard] was a member of that [Fascist] organization in Australia?" to which Phelan answered, "I never knew they had an organization in Australia".<sup>388</sup>

In 1935 Italy invaded Abyssinia and as a response the Melbourne paper *The Argus* following the British called for a worldwide boycott of Italian goods.<sup>389</sup> The issue was of little importance to the Catholic study group the Campion Society except for Val Adami and to a lesser extent, B.A. Santamaria. Val Adami organised a meeting where he promoted the Italian case.<sup>390</sup> Among the Campions, Denys Jackson was pro-Italian and wrote articles supporting the Italian position. B.A. Santamaria, on the other hand and according to Campion historian Colin Jory, "could not resist making one isolated snipe at the propagators of the anti-Italian case; and he recommended that readers follow Jackson's writing on the issue..."<sup>391</sup>

Mannix too created controversy over the Abyssinian invasion, stating publicly that Italy had wrongly invaded Abyssinia and that the treaty of Versailles left Italy "with no

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<sup>386</sup> Robert Pascoe, *Buongiorno Australia*, (Greenhouse Publications: Richmond, 1987), p.88.

<sup>387</sup> James Gobbo, "Italians in Victoria and the Second World War," May 19 1988, p.4.

<sup>388</sup> Aliens Tribunal, Salvatore Pante, May 13 1941, A.A., MP529/3, Pante, S.

<sup>389</sup> *The Argus*, October 14 1935, p.9.

<sup>390</sup> Colin Jory, *The Campion Society and Catholic Social Militancy in Australia, 1929-1939* (Harpham: Sydney, 1986), p.70.

possibility of an expansion of territory.”<sup>392</sup> But Mannix did not stop there. Instead he spelt out the paradox by the press in its hostility towards the Italian nation while nations such as the British who had done similar atrocities the Irish likewise the French in Africa had been ignored. Mannix concluded by arguing that all wars are lamentable whether the party be Italy, France, Britain or Russia.<sup>393</sup>

Several autobiographies have grasped the community reaction to the situation in Abyssinia. Take for example the story told in *Amelia: A Long Journey* where in 1936 when Italy “needed gold to expand its military operations in Africa a call went out for Jewellery.... Whole families in Melbourne parted with their rings, chains and bracelets for Italy. At the club they organised special days where they had a huge basket up on the stage and people filed up one by one to drop their rings into it. Not everyone gave willingly. The story went round that the Consul’s secretary had brought a cheap ring which he surrendered with much ceremony before encouraging others to follow his example.”<sup>394</sup>

At the time of the Abyssinian invasion an extensive report was submitted by the Australian authorities on the Italian fascist activities and propaganda in Australia. This was one of the many reports commissioned on fascism in Australia by the authorities, but this one stands out for one particular reason. The reason is the mention of the name Santamaria.

The report mentions that at the time the *fascio* in Melbourne was operating from the Italian consular offices in Bank Place, Melbourne, and its secretary was Ginese Triaca.

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<sup>391</sup> *ibid.* p.72.

<sup>392</sup> *The Advocate*, October 17 1935, p.12.

<sup>393</sup> *The Tribune*, May 7 1936, Front Page.

Yet, in one section under the heading “Italian Fascism at the University” it reports that “there has been an attempt to extend the activities of the *fascio* to the Melbourne University. The leader of the group formed is a Mr Santamaria, a law student, Australian born of Italian parentage. He is understood to be the present editor of the ‘Catholic Worker’ a strong anti-communist church organ.”<sup>395</sup>

There is little to support the report that Mr. Santamaria was in fact, attempting to start a *fascio* at Melbourne university. Its inclusion in the report does much to discredit the entire police report. If they could get this wrong, then what about the rest of the report.

There is no doubt that the Spanish Civil War had a major impact on Catholics worldwide as well as in Australia. B.A. Santamaria himself acknowledges the impact on his life while studying at Melbourne University: “It was the outbreak and course of the Spanish Civil War which reshaped my own priorities and those of most of my colleagues...”<sup>396</sup> The Spanish Civil War was according to the Catholic opinion of the day an attack, “under the inspiration of International Communism...”<sup>397</sup> It was a battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. Accounts of atrocities against Catholics were reported in best selling Australian Catholic Truth Society pamphlets like *Red Spain* by G.M. Godden. Other pamphlets such as *For God and Spain* – also published in Australia by the Australian Catholic Truth Society – defended the Church in its siding with General Franco on the Spanish Civil War: “We turn to the cause of the Right. It is, first and foremost, the salvation of Spain from Russia’s plight... Victory will mean that the

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<sup>394</sup> Triaca, *op.cit.* p.132.

<sup>395</sup> “A Summary on Italian Fascist Activities and Propaganda in Australia”, December 1936, Australian Archives, reproduced in full in G. Cresciani, *Migrants in Mates*, (Knockmore Press: Sydney, 1988), p.189.

<sup>396</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.33.

<sup>397</sup> G.M. Godden, *Red Spain*, (Australian Catholic Truth Society: Melbourne, 1937) p.3.

Church will be restored, and that anarchist agitation will be put down. The rule of authority, in some form or another, will be restored.”<sup>398</sup>

While at university Santamaria engaged in debates particularly political debates. As early as 1934, he took on the affirmative side on the question of whether the “Fascist revolutions have been really revolutionary, that is whether they have meant a definitive break with the traditions of the nineteenth century in the internal and international sphere.”<sup>399</sup> Despite this, it is far fetched to come to a conclusion that he was a supporter of Mussolini or fascism. When looking at his 1934 thesis, one can see that the rise of fascism was a complex question, and Santamaria wanted to present a fairer and more objective position on the rise of fascism in Italy.

It was at Melbourne University that Santamaria met some significant Catholics who were to inspire and challenge the young Santamaria. The first of these was Fr F.N. Hackett. Fr Hackett was not only close to B.A. Santamaria because of the Catholic library association, but according to Fr Tom Daly, Fr Hackett was a close friend of Fr de Francesco. Fr Hackett was an Irishman born in Kilkenny Ireland 1878. Like a lot of Irish Jesuits, Fr Hackett was trained in France. In 1922 he was sent to Australia.<sup>400</sup> Here he performed parish duties along with Fr de Francesco at St Ignatius Richmond. From 1934 to 1940 he was rector of Xavier College, in Kew. He was also involved at the Catholic library where he first met B.A. Santamaria. Hackett died tragically in 1954, hit by a taxi while crossing a main road. His last words were that he didn’t ever anticipate that he was

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<sup>398</sup> A. de Blacam, *For God and Spain: The Truth about the Spanish Civil War*, (Australian Catholic Truth Society: Melbourne, 1936), p.20.

<sup>399</sup> *Farrago*, June 13 1934, copy provided to the author by Paul Ormonde.

<sup>400</sup> Strong, *op.cit.* p.129.

going to go to heaven via a taxi! *News Weekly*, for his obituary, remembered him as a great book man.<sup>401</sup>

It was also at the Catholic library that B.A. Santamaria met Helen Power whom he later married. According to Santamaria: “there was a bit of inter marriage there and I met my wife because she worked at the Catholic library.”<sup>402</sup>

But more significantly it was while B.A. Santamaria was at Melbourne University that he became involved with the Campion Society. The Campion Society was formed in 1931 by Santamaria’s former teacher, Frank Maher. Maher along with the English broadcaster and *Advocate* writer Denys Jackson were concerned at the “parochial nature of Australian Catholicism”. To combat this they formed discussion groups, which became known as the Campion Society.<sup>403</sup> From the Campions the idea of a Catholic paper based on the American *Catholic Worker* was proposed and the Campions sought finance for the project. But when no finance came B.A. Santamaria took the initiative and began the paper by publishing its first issue in January 1936<sup>404</sup> and sent to Pope Pius XI and another to Joseph Stalin, Moscow.”<sup>405</sup>

*The Catholic Worker* led to the first meeting between Santamaria and Archbishop Mannix: “it was the first occasion on which I met the Archbishop. I was accompanied by a close Campion friend, Val Adami. Nothing in the interview gave any inkling of the closeness of the relationship which was to grow during the forties and remain until the Archbishop’s death in 1963.”<sup>406</sup>

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<sup>401</sup> *News Weekly*, July 28 1954, p.5.

<sup>402</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview with Robert Pascoe, op.cit.

<sup>403</sup> Campbell, op.cit. p.47.

<sup>404</sup> *ibid.* p.64.

<sup>405</sup> James G. Murtagh, *Australia: The Catholic Church*, (Sheed and Ward: New York, 1946), p.215.

<sup>406</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.18.



Val Adami like B.A. Santamaria was also of an Italian background. He was the oldest son of Valentino Giovanni Adami, an Italian born bookmaker. Val Adami went to Melbourne University during 1924-1931 and was admitted as a barrister and solicitor in 1932.<sup>407</sup>

In 1938, B.A. Santamaria became assistant director of the National Secretariat of Catholic Action. It was a choice made by B.A. Santamaria that did not win the approval of his father.<sup>408</sup> Santamaria was set to enter the bar, but: “I had to go home and tell my father, whose great ambition was that I should be a lawyer....”<sup>409</sup> It is important to note, that B.A. Santamaria’s sons, Joseph, Robert and Paul all became lawyers.

Towards the end of 1938 saw the arrival of another important person in this early period of the Santamaria story. And like de Francesco, Modotti was never mentioned in any of the later writings of B.A. Santamaria. A Jesuit priest, born in Basiliano, Udine, Northern Italy, Modotti had spent the last 16 years working in India as a missionary in the province of Madras. It was when he was in Rome that Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli at the request of Archbishop Mannix appointed him to work in Melbourne.<sup>410</sup> Father Modotti’s role in Melbourne was not exclusively restricted to the Italian community. Apart from his chaplaincy work Modotti gave retreats and lectures to all groups inside the Archdiocese.<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> Val Adami, letter to the author, July 2 1996. (ACA).

<sup>408</sup> Triaca, op.cit. p.64.

<sup>409</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview by Robin Hughes, op.cit.

<sup>410</sup> “Statement by the Reverend Father Hugh Modotti, Catholic Priest of the Society of Jesus, Residing at the House of the Jesuit Fathers in Hawthorn”, April 15 1943, (JPAM).

<sup>411</sup> *The Advocate*, April 6 1939, p.25.

Such was the influence of Fr Modotti in Melbourne that when Sir James Gobbo became Governor of Victoria he mentioned Father Modotti as one of his influences. Gobbo also recalled lectures given by Modotti on the Italian poet Dante: “the vivid imagery of Blake, especially of the inferno, terrified me, but it gave me a great love of the Divine Comedy.”<sup>412</sup>

With the arrival of Fr Modotti the small Italian community raised the funds for his car. Donations came from the Italian fascist Consul and Archbishop Mannix, as well as Fathers Beovich and Lyons. Among the Italian community the notable donors included: Giuseppe Santamaria (B.A. Santamaria’s father), B.A. Santamaria’s friend Val Adami, Drs Pagliaro and Santoro.<sup>413</sup>

With Modotti, a significant change took place within the Italian community. His mandate was clear – to assimilate the Italian community and to work for the “spiritual needs of the community.”<sup>414</sup>

There is no doubt that this was the clear mandate of Archbishop Mannix who stated at the function that: “The Italians in this stage of transition were anxious, and were quite entitled to have a priest of their own nationality. The time would come... when Italian priests would not be needed in Australia. Without ceasing to be Italians in sympathy and culture, the young Italians in time would virtually become Australians, and, no doubt would be represented in the priesthood.”<sup>415</sup>

This contradicted the fascist aims within the Italian community as proposed by the Italian Consulate Officials who promoted fascism and *italianita*. One of the major fascist

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<sup>412</sup> Mandy Candappa, “Sir James prepares for Top Office”, *Kairos*, February 9 1997, p.5.

<sup>413</sup> “Sottoscrizione per l’automobile di Padre Modotti”, Undated, Italian Consulate Papers, Melbourne, (Italian Historical Society, Carlton).

<sup>414</sup> *The Advocate*, September 22 1938, p.2.

<sup>415</sup> *ibid*.

aims was “maintaining the use of the Italian language and retarding Italians from assimilating Australian customs and ideals.”<sup>416</sup>

One of the first tasks of Fr Modotti was the establishment of the first Italian language religious journal in Australia, entitled *L'Angelo della Famiglia*. Its first issue had the endorsement of Archbishop Daniel Mannix who stated: “The *Angel of the Family* which is published with the National Australian Secretariat of the Catholic Movement comes to fill a real gap in the life of the Italian Community of Melbourne.”<sup>417</sup> And it was placed safely in the arms of the newly formed Secretariat of Catholic Action of which Santamaria was now the assistant director.

B.A. Santamaria never mentioned Modotti. In fact in an interview with the author in 1995 he claimed hardly knowing him.<sup>418</sup> On the other hand, in an earlier interview in 1986 with Pascoe he stated that he “knew him intimately” and that they were “very close friends.”<sup>419</sup> There are many examples where B.A. Santamaria and Father Modotti had a close working relationship. The first and most obvious was B.A. Santamaria’s 1939 article about the Italian problem in Australia.

The first draft of this article is found at the Jesuit archives in Melbourne with five pages of editorial comments made by Modotti. Santamaria acknowledges in the initial draft the work of fascism and Catholic Action in Italy. He submitted the first draft of the article to Modotti, who wrote the following paragraph, which Santamaria then included in his published draft:

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<sup>416</sup> Cresciani, *op.cit.* p.155.

<sup>417</sup> *L'Angelo della Famiglia*, January 1939, p.2.

<sup>418</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview with the author for 4<sup>th</sup> year thesis - A. S. Cappello, “Aspects of Italian Catholic Life in Melbourne with special references to the political convictions of its Chaplain’s, 1919 to 1945” Yarra Theological Union, Melbourne.

<sup>419</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview with Robert Pascoe, *op.cit.*

But the actual revival [in Italy] ... has been due to the Catholic Action Movement, which in Italy has worked miracles. The work of Italian Catholic Action, especially in problems concerning youth and education, has often been conducted despite the bitterest opposition from the Fascist regime.<sup>420</sup>

Modotti in his notes to the young Santamaria argues that Santamaria was attributing “too often” the religious revival of the Italian people “to the new fascist regime”.<sup>421</sup> This demonstrates a flaw in Santamaria’s attitude to fascism. Despite Santamaria’s attempts to give an objective picture of the rise of fascism and its role in the religious revival in Italy, Modotti sets the record straight and admonishes Santamaria for giving too much praise to fascism.

Santamaria stated how to tackle the Italian migrants: “The second is the potential value of Catholic Action organizations, which are likely to develop in Australia in the near future.”<sup>422</sup> Santamaria acknowledged Fr. Modotti for the fact that Australia had this model of Italian Catholic Action:

Italians will respond to these special efforts [which as I have argued is possibly modelled on Catholic Action] on their behalf [as] is proved from the remarkable success which has already attended the work of Father Modotti in Melbourne.<sup>423</sup>

Modotti at the time of assisting Santamaria with his *Australian Catholic Record* article was beginning a programme to end the Italian community’s association with the Italian consular officials and fascism in general. Modotti from his arrival in Australia, opposed the expansion of fascism in Australia. In this he was supported by Mannix who saw assimilation of the Italian community as the best way to fight this problem. Assimilation was also the biggest barrier and opposition to the Italian Consular Officials’ control of

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<sup>420</sup> Fr Ugo Modotti, “Corrected notes for the “Italian Problem in Australia” - B.A. Santamaria, undated circa 1939 (JPAM).

<sup>421</sup> *ibid.*

the Italian community. The policy of assimilation entailed the letting go of any attachment to Italian culture.<sup>424</sup>

The policy of assimilating the Italians began with decentralisation. Decentralisation entailed Italians attending Masses in their own parishes rather than the usual practice of one centralised parish.<sup>425</sup> To administer this, Fr. Bernard Stewart said the Italian Mass at Carlton and Fr. O'Hanlon said the Mass at West Melbourne. Modotti, who was situated in Richmond, said the Mass at Richmond. By doing this, the Italian community was not clustered around a particular church but was spread out around three parishes, engaging locally in the life of these parishes. This was contrary to the time of de Francesco's chaplaincy where the Italian community was united around St. Ignatius Richmond. Now with Fr. Modotti the Italian community was integrated within their local parish communities. Modotti did remind parishioners that both Stewart and O'Hanlon "spoke correctly our beautiful Italian language."<sup>426</sup> Keeping in mind that the Mass at this period was said entirely in Latin, only the sermon was said in English and some priest didn't even preach a sermon.

Another important aspect of assimilation was the language. Mannix also required that the homily be followed by an English translation.<sup>427</sup> The ideal was that eventually there would be no need for the homily to be said in Italian, as Italians would speak fluent English rather than their native tongue. To ensure this would take place, English classes were organized for the Italian community. These classes were held in the evening at

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<sup>422</sup> Santamaria, "The Italian Problem in Australia", p.298.

<sup>423</sup> *ibid.* p.305.

<sup>424</sup> Fr Ugo Modotti, Letter to Provincial, December 31 1945, (JAMP)

<sup>425</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>426</sup> *L'Angelo della Famiglia*, April 1939, (Newspaper clipping).

<sup>427</sup> James Gobbo, *The Italian Heritage of Victoria*. (Italian Historical Society: Melbourne, 1984), p.14.

North Fitzroy and in July 1939 sixty adults were enrolled.<sup>428</sup> The teachers were volunteers like Valentino Adami, who was a close friend of B.A. Santamaria. Learning English had many benefits for the migrants who had no other available source of social support that would allow them to learn the language. It is interesting to note the absent B.A. Santamaria.

Apart from assimilating the Italians Modotti organized recreational alternatives for the Italian community which were in direct opposition to the Consular activities. This was the case with the *Gruppo Cattolico Femminile* (*Catholic Women's Group*). The Italian Consulate had previously organised the *fascio femminile*, which was a fascist social group for women. It was the *fascio femminile* who organised gold collections for the Abyssinian War Campaign back in 1936. Modotti, to counter this group's influence in the Italian community began this counter women's group, which engaged in social causes like visiting the sick in hospitals.

As well as the Italian Consular Officials, there were the anti-fascists. Modotti's troubles with them were to emerge after Italy entered the war in mid to late June 1940. Prior to the war, it was Mannix, not Modotti, who became concerned about their existence.<sup>429</sup> When, in 1939, the anti-fascists planned to open a school for Italian children, Mannix responded by asking Modotti to start their own school. The Italian Consular Officials, who had their own Italian classes at the Dante Society, strongly protested to Modotti.<sup>430</sup> This third lot of classes, according to the Italian Consular Officials, was seen as an anti-fascist move on the part of Modotti. It is clear that Mannix and Modotti, by choosing to open their own school rather than using the existing classes available at the Dante

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<sup>428</sup> *L'Angelo della Famiglia*, July 1938, p.8.

Society, showed their concern to develop a third way, independent of the anti-fascists and the Italian Consulate.

Modotti (like Santamaria) had to fight off the fascist tag. In 1945, for example, the anti-fascists launched a major attack accusing him of being a fascist<sup>431</sup> and then another later in 1980 by Gianfranco Cresciani in *Fascism Anti- Fascism and Italians in Australia*. Their proof of Modotti's fascism was found in an article entitled "A World Without a Soul" which Modotti penned in 1939. The article itself speaks about a world on the brink of destruction because of its failure to recognize the necessity of religion. The following sentence, however, has come into question by Modotti's critics:

History – impartial judge – will say how far-sighted and wise was Benito Mussolini's domestic policy that in understanding the value of religion has wanted to return to the homeland as a better guarantee of that renewal and of that grandeur that has made Italy the mother of the people.

Critics of Modotti end their quotation of the article after the word "policy," failing to include the crucial remainder of the sentence.<sup>432</sup> Yet, the remainder of the sentence is crucial in putting the quote into its proper context, thus allowing a fuller interpretation. First, Modotti does not elevate Mussolini with any titles. There is no usage of the words "Il Duce" or any other accolades. Secondly, there is a specific mention of only Mussolini's domestic policy, thereby excluding Mussolini's international policy. From this, it can be concluded that Modotti may well have disapproved of the Abyssinian campaign and the Berlin-Rome axis. Thirdly, Mussolini's far-sightedness and wisdom are only accredited because he has allowed religious renewal. In Modotti's mind, it is because of the Lateran Pacts and concessions made to the church, and only insofar as

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<sup>429</sup> Fr Ugo Modotti, letter to Provincial, December 31, 1945, (JAMP).

<sup>430</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>431</sup> *Il Risveglio*, October 3 1945, front page.

<sup>432</sup> Cresciani, *op.cit.* p.188.

Mussolini is kind and willing to co-operate with the church, that the adjectives “wise and far-sightedness” are used.

The importance of the fascist tag on Modotti is to show how that same tag was also applied to B.A. Santamaria in particular by the supporters of the Italia Libera Movement. Cresciani is one such example as is Richard Bosworth, who coming to a conclusion that Modotti was sympathetic to Fascism then also made the same conclusion about B.A. Santamaria. This will be further looked at in Chapter Seven of this thesis. Fr Modotti was certainly an important influence on B.A. Santamaria and he was to involve himself much more with the Italian community while Santamaria involved himself with the outbreak of war.

## **WAR STARTS IN EUROPE**

In Europe in September 1939 within days of a German invasion on Poland, Britain declared war on Germany, followed later by France. Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies, announced soon after that since Britain was at war, then Australia was at war. The response was “subdued” as the war was in Europe and not in Australia.<sup>433</sup> Italy remained, for the time being, neutral.

Several months earlier in 1939, the young Santamaria preparing for his marriage took part in a Peace Rally, which was held on May 28, 1939. The idea for the peace rally had come from Catholic Action in which Santamaria and Frank Maher were essentially involved. The event was a success with 60000 people attending at the Exhibition building. At the meeting Santamaria moved the resolution: “to abandon the competition



of armaments, to stamp out the spirit of force and war, and to submit international problems to the arbitration of reason and friendly discussion.”<sup>434</sup> In light of later positions on war adopted by Santamaria, it was an interesting episode, particularly when the aggressors were Nazism and Fascism.

B.A. Santamaria was married to Helen Power on October 1939 by Monsignor Hannon at Immaculate Conception Church, Hawthorn. The marriage led to Santamaria moving from Brunswick to Hawthorn, to the shift away from Brunswick and away from the family home.

In leaving the family household, Santamaria was helped by shifting his allegiance away from his father Giuseppe Santamaria and to Daniel Mannix. Now living in the Eastern suburbs, and with Mannix also in the Eastern suburbs, Santamaria on his way home would “drop in and talk to him... always telling him how things were going....”<sup>435</sup>

According to Santamaria, Daniel Mannix “without any doubt was the greatest man I’ve ever met and I haven’t met any greater.”<sup>436</sup>

With the friendship with Mannix and with his marriage Santamaria was able to leave the *domus* and enter the Irish-Catholic world as stated later in life by Santamaria: “the Catholic community at that time was of Irish Catholic background. I didn’t belong to that, but I always felt at home in it and so my instincts were that way.”<sup>437</sup>

## CONCLUSION

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<sup>433</sup> L. Connors at el., *Australia’s Frontline: Remembering the 1939-1945 War* (UQP: St Lucia, 1992), p.2.

<sup>434</sup> Frank Murphy, *Daniel Mannix: Archbishop of Melbourne*, (Advocate Press: Melbourne, 1948), p. 189.

<sup>435</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview by Robin Hughes, op.cit.

Studies on the second generation Italian-Australians have found that they would have had loyalties that were divided and diversified.<sup>438</sup> His interactions with classmates, neighbourhoods and even the church would have impacted on the young B.A. Santamaria. The psychological response of the young Santamaria would have been ambivalence towards his parents and perhaps a “rejection of the old world ways of life.”<sup>439</sup> This meant leaving the *domus* and his filial obligations to his father. In Brunswick, Santamaria grew up in a culture that was influenced by the Southern Italian *domus*, with its own notions of work, the role of women, the oldest son, religion, self-sufficiency and its social networks. This period before 1939, helped by the Italian chaplains, shaped his philosophy that was to guide the Movement. As argued by Vincent Moleta: “There, the virtues of piety and family cohesion were exemplified in his parents and grandparents; there, the experience of small business, hard work and frugal living, in which he was immersed as a child in Melbourne in the years before and during the Great depression provided a lasting model of dignified self-sufficiency against the allures of big business and international finance.”<sup>440</sup>

His time in Brunswick was also shaped by an important historical event that happened in Europe. It was not the Spanish Civil War, but rather the rise of Fascism in Italy and the Italian participation in the Second World War. With B.A. Santamaria’s association with his father, or the Italian community to which he belonged, or its chaplains, there was an undeniable link between fascism and the emerging B.A. Santamaria. This link helped with B.A. Santamaria’s own interest on the topic culminating in his thesis on the rise of

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<sup>436</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>437</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>438</sup> Luigi Favero and Graziano Tassello, “Demographics and Social Characteristics of the Italian Community in Australia and its Second Generation”, CIRC Papers, North Fitzroy, 1986, pp.13-14.

<sup>439</sup> J. A. Crispino, *The Assimilation of Ethnic Groups: The Italian Case*, (Center for Migration Studies: New York, 1980) p.27.

fascism in Italy. The period is also shaped by his relationship with his father as being the oldest son, this relationship is one of “conflict” within the *domus*; “Fathers and their oldest sons ... engaged in competition for authority in the *domus*.”<sup>441</sup> This combined with the demands of the oldest son within the *domus*; marriage was a way out for the young Santamaria. The other way out was the role of Mannix, which allowed Santamaria to shift his obligations from his father to Archbishop Mannix – his Italian father for an Irish mentor. The role of Mannix was in no doubt an important influence to the young Santamaria. But the Mannix role was in bringing Santamaria into the new world, helped with the Christian Brothers of which Santamaria attributes his religious belief to this training by the brothers.

Santamaria’s moving away from the *domus* could have also been a part of an upward mobility, the second-generation Italian-Australian moving upward and away from the economics of the first-generation into a more affluent workplace and livelihood. Living in the East of Melbourne was living in the heart of the Anglo-Catholic world, the place of his employment and close to his new mentor, Archbishop Daniel Mannix. It was as Stephen Steinberg argues in his book *The Ethnic Myth*: “...Italian mobility on the job reflected less the priorities of the family than it did the condition of the first generation, which entered the country without the skills that might have assured them a rapid climb in New York’s manufacturing economy; once they acquired these skills... they moved up.”<sup>442</sup>

In the following chapter, we see how his interaction with the Italian community was to change. It was to move away from being a contributor to being an interested observer,

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<sup>440</sup> Moleta, *op.cit.* p.453.

<sup>441</sup> Orsi, *op.cit.* p.118.

<sup>442</sup> Stephen Steinberg, *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity and Class in America* (Beacon Press, 2001) p.100.

using the “Italian” as a means to his ends, and those of the Movement, which he formed in 1940.

Therefore, his Italian chapter in Brunswick got very little airplay in his recollections of his life.

## CHAPTER 5:

### **B.A. SANTAMARIA: HIS LIFE AND WORK AS AN AUSTRALIAN OF AN ITALIAN DESCENT AND CULTURE FROM 1939 UNTIL HIS DEATH.**

This chapter will aim to look at the historical influences of Santamaria and in particular to those pertaining to his Italian background from the time of his marriage (1939) to his death. This chapter will be a history. It will be a cultural history from the author's positionality as an Italian Australian. As a cultural history what will be highlighted is Santamaria's background and how it came to play with the historical events of the day. It could be argued that it is an Italian-Australian historical interpretation of B.A. Santamaria.

Beginning in 1939, Santamaria commenced his work with the National Catholic Rural Movement. He also began the Catholic Social Studies Movement, better known as the Movement, which later became the National Civic Council. His involvement with these organizations played a part in the eventful split of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) in 1955. These events were recorded in B.A. Santamaria's autobiography *Against the Tide*. What is not recorded in *Against the Tide* or in any of his writings were his Italian interactions, particularly with his parents' Italian community, the Italian chaplains and the Italian community during and after the war, and his efforts to recruit members of the Italian community to the Movement.

This chapter will interpret those "Italian" episodes in Santamaria's life such as the Land Settlement schemes as well as the position taken by Santamaria towards the end of his life on the topic of multiculturalism. A section of this chapter will also focus on the

Asian question, and the relationship that Santamaria sought with the Asians, in order to determine if because of Santamaria's background he was sympathetic to the refugee and the new-Australian migrant. The establishment of the organizations that Santamaria began during this period and the inspiration, origins and application of these organisations with particular reference to his culture will be looked at in depth in chapter eight.

B.A. Santamaria married Helen Power on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1939. She was 22, he was 24. He married outside the *domus*, to an Anglo-Saxon, which enabled him to move away from the working class suburb of Brunswick to the more affluent suburb of Kew. Despite this, studies have shown that intermarriage does not diminish the ethnicity of the Italian partner; rather "the non-Italian partner is drawn to the magnet of the Italian... family."<sup>443</sup> But in the case of Santamaria, the move was a distancing from his family and moreover from his background, a coming out of the *domus* done before the impact of the unfolding events in Europe and Italy. As for Helen Power, very little is known about her. But she served the role expected of her in the *domus*. She stayed home and raised the children as was customary at the time of Santamaria's formation. Writing later in 1953 Santamaria shares the difficulties of such a task: "So at the beginning of 1953, when my wife, who had borne the burden of raising a family then numbering six with very little money and not much companionship to ease her task, asked for the first time whether this abnormal life pattern was to last forever, I felt confident in saying that within two years the position would be so strong that I could resign my task and devote myself to my family."<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> Varacalli, *op.cit.* p.48.

<sup>444</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide.* p.115.

Back to 1939, after Santamaria had moved out and away from Brunswick, the Italian chaplain Father Modotti with Archbishop Daniel Mannix was beginning to work for the future of the Italian community. Modotti and Mannix had a plan in the “*Opera Religiosa Italiana*” (*Opera*). This involved a house and a nerve centre with three or four imported priests who would run the apostolate for the Italian community throughout Australia, in the same way that Catholic Action had been set up in Melbourne to serve the entire nation. Ironically the house was to situate itself not in Brunswick, Richmond, North Melbourne or Carlton where the Italians were found but rather in Hawthorn close to the Jesuits, B.A. Santamaria and Archbishop Daniel Mannix.

The idea for the house had come from Santamaria, who in 1939 wrote in an article that “the Holy See should establish a real mission for Italians in Australia. Three or four priests would certainly suffice for this.”<sup>445</sup> It wasn’t long after the publication of Santamaria’s article that we see the emergence of the proposal for the *Opera*.

To launch the *Opera* a meeting took place in May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1940, at St Georges Hall, Carlton, where Father Modotti presented the idea for a priest’s house to the community. This was a change from the decentralised policy of the Archdiocese. Here, the vision presented was one of a centralised operation like that of Catholic Action. On the night Modotti concluded the evening with an appeal.<sup>446</sup> But the appeal for funds was not given by Modotti but by B.A. Santamaria’s father, Giuseppe Santamaria, who himself pledged 100 pounds towards the house.<sup>447</sup> This is perhaps the last time we see Giuseppe Santamaria take a centre role within the Italian community. The change coincides with Italy’s entry in the war. It was here the central role moved from Giuseppe to his son B.A. Santamaria.

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<sup>445</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “The Italian Problem in Australia”, p.299.

<sup>446</sup> *Italo-Australian*, May 25 1940, (Newspaper clipping).

<sup>447</sup> *ibid*.

Giuseppe was now going to have a minor role within the Italian community. There is no doubt that with Italy's entry in the war, Giuseppe and many of his fellow compatriots became either humiliated or disillusioned. Giuseppe Santamaria now had a son fighting with the Australian armed forces and according to another son Dr Joe Santamaria, there was no question of conflicting loyalties in the Santamaria household.<sup>448</sup>

On the evening of the *Opera's* launch on May 1940, sub-committees were formed and the minutes for this meeting were taken by B.A. Santamaria.<sup>449</sup> The committee members included Dr Soccorso Santoro, Gualtiero Vaccari, Giuseppe Santamaria and B.A. Santamaria himself.<sup>450</sup> In an interview with the author of this thesis (who didn't know at the time of the interview that B.A. Santamaria was the secretary of the *Opera*) B.A. Santamaria denied knowing of the *Opera's* existence and claimed to the author that he wasn't involved.<sup>451</sup>

Plans for the *Opera* came to a halt when in Italy on June 10, 1940, Mussolini "without consulting his Fascist Grand Council"<sup>452</sup> declared War on Great Britain and France. The declaration of war was to have a severe consequence for Italians living in Australia. In declaring war on the allies, Italy had inadvertently declared war on all Italians living abroad, Australia included.

Only days before the declaration of war by the Italian government the editorial of the Sydney Italian paper *Italo-Australian* read: "We feel that native born Australians will join

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<sup>448</sup> Joseph Santamaria, letter to the author, June 6 2007, (ACA)..

<sup>449</sup> *L'Angelo della Famiglia*, June 1940, p.16.

<sup>450</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>451</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview with the author for 4<sup>th</sup> year thesis - A. S. Cappello, "Aspects of Italian Catholic Life in Melbourne with special references to the political convictions of its Chaplain's, 1919 to 1945" Yarra Theological Union, Melbourne.

<sup>452</sup> Barbara Barclay-Carter, *Italy Speaks*, (Gollancz: London, 1947), p.47.



Italo-Australians in endorsing the Italian official recognition of the friendly feeling existing between Italy and the Commonwealth.”<sup>453</sup>

The Australian government reacted to Italy’s declaration of war by adopting a policy of interning those Italians the government considered as being sympathetic to fascism and therefore a threat to national security. Half of the Italian internees, a total of 2216,<sup>454</sup> came from Queensland, while in Victoria the number was only 170.<sup>455</sup> These included most of the Melbourne fascist group the *Gino Lisa*: Ginese Triaca, Mario Spierani, Dr Giorgio Santoro and even Domenico Boffa. Giuseppe Santamaria was not arrested. Keep in mind that the Triacas were close friends of the Santamarias.<sup>456</sup>

Giuseppe Santamaria, no doubt, would have supported the Australian war effort. His son, Felix, crucial to his plans to take over the family business had enlisted in the Australian armed forces and was sent to Papua New Guinea. Felix, while in New Guinea, was said to have been saved by his sister Josephine who by “sending him a (contaminated) fruit cake ... caused him to be hospitalised for a period with acute gastroenteritis just as his unit went to the front line.”<sup>457</sup> Dr Joe Santamaria also recalled that “we believed that the Italian nation generally did not have its heart in a possible Axis victory in Europe that would inevitably result in a Nazi (and Communist) dominated Europe.”<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>453</sup> *Italo-Australian*, June 1 1940, p. 1.

<sup>454</sup> Ilma Martinuzzi, O’Brien. “Life Histories of Citizens and Exclusion” *Enemy Aliens: The Internment of Italian Migrants in Australia During the Second World War*, (Connor Court Publishing: Bacchus Marsh, 2006), p. 20.

<sup>455</sup> C. Elkner, “The Internment of Italian-Australians: A perspective from Melbourne, Australia” in *Enemy Aliens: The Internment of Italian Migrants in Australia During the Second World War*, (Connor Court Publishing: Bacchus Marsh, 2006) p.4.

<sup>456</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview with Rob Pascoe, op.cit.

<sup>457</sup> Joseph Santamaria, letter to the author, June 6 2007, (ACA).

<sup>458</sup> *ibid.*

It is not certain how B.A. Santamaria reacted to the arrests and detention of many Italian migrants. He himself earlier in 1939 had become exempt from war service thanks to the intervention of Archbishop Mannix who wrote to Labor Minister Eddie Ward asking for an exemption.<sup>459</sup> Santamaria also does not mention his brother's direct involvement in the war effort in any of his writings.

The internments would have been well known to the Santamaria family. Some of their friends like the Triacas and most of the Club Cavour Committee had been interned. Val Adami, close friend of Santamaria, was so concerned for the welfare of the Italian community that he felt the need for a local paper in Italian with an English translation to keep the Italian community aware of the happenings and to help manage the crisis. The authorities refused the request.<sup>460</sup>

Meanwhile on June 11, 1940, Lieutenant General of Southern Command, J. L. Whitham, signed the recommendation of the "particulars of persons for internment."<sup>461</sup> The particulars were of Father Ugo Modotti. According to the details on the arrest warrant, "detention is considered necessary or expedient in the interest of public safety."<sup>462</sup> On that same morning, Major Browne telephoned Inspector Hattam of Southern Command asking that action regarding "apprehension of Fr. Modotti be held in abeyance."<sup>463</sup>

The previous day, Major Roland Browne had met up with Monsignor Patrick Lyons, Vicar-General of the Melbourne Catholic Archdiocese who argued Modotti's case stating that he was an anti-fascist rather than a fascist. At the conclusion of this meeting Browne concluded: "as a result of the examination, and particularly in view of the

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<sup>459</sup> Duncan. *op.cit.* p.45

<sup>460</sup> Inspector Hattam, Report on the Italian Newspaper, *Il Giornale Italiano*, June 12 1940, A.A., V/16878S

<sup>461</sup> Captain E. Hattam to G.S.O. M.I. Southern Command, June 11 1940, A.A., A367/1, C62490.

assurance given by the Administrator [Mons. Lyons], with the consent of the Archbishop I would suggest... that he be not interned.”<sup>464</sup>

Despite Browne’s recommendation on June 11th 1940, two officers attempted to arrest Father Modotti the following day. B.A. Santamaria recalled the arrest where two plain clothed police officers arrived at Manresa (the house in Hawthorn where the Jesuits resided), to arrest Modotti. One police officer opened the door of the police car hoping that Modotti would enter. Modotti refused, slamming the door of the car shut without entering. Modotti then took off in his car to Raheen in Kew, the residence of Archbishop Mannix, with the police officers in pursuit. Upon their arrival at Raheen, Mannix telephoned Brigadier Street, Minister for the Army, to whom he protested about the arrest of Fr. Modotti. Brigadier Street, after assessing the case, promised Mannix “that no further action be taken” against Fr. Modotti. The significance of this story was that its recollection came from B.A. Santamaria at an interview with the author. The conversation was an “off the record recollection” this despite his repeating of the story to several other staff members at the time.<sup>465</sup>

The attempted arrest of Modotti, highlights the seriousness with which the authorities viewed leaders within the Italian community. The reason for his attempted arrest is contained in a dossier where the main piece of evidence was the *Advocate* article heralding Modotti’s arrival. Hattam in using the article paid special attention to the sentence: “Fr. Modotti’s mission in Australia is approved by Il Duce.”<sup>466</sup> The other five documents used by Inspector Hattam were letters from the Italian Consul in Melbourne to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Rome. The letters, dated from July 1938 to

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<sup>462</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>463</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>464</sup> Major Roland Browne to G.S.O. M.I. Southern Command, June 11 1940, *ibid.*

November 1938, spoke of Modotti's appointment to Australia where the Consul suggested how he and the other consular officials could be of some assistance to him.<sup>467</sup>

The reason for the internment of Italian migrants – some of them even naturalised British subjects – was a belief that some Australians of an Italian background posed a security threat to the Australian war effort. This belief taken to its extremes entailed a conviction that a fifth column working behind the lines sabotaging Australia's war effort.

Amazingly even the Catholic Church, although condemning acts of violence against Italian civilians in Australia, conceded that the authorities had to deal with a fifth column, as it stated in the *Advocate*: "Any attempt to menace and attack them will rightly be opposed, not only by the authorities – who have every means and full knowledge of how to deal with subversive aliens and members of the Fifth Column – but by the people as well."<sup>468</sup>

Despite the notion of the Italians being potential fifth columnists, only days before Italy declared war on the allies, the Italian community had served breakfast to 400 airmen at their communion breakfast with Archbishop Mannix.<sup>469</sup> The Italian contribution to this function was organised by Fr Ugo Modotti. Hence if there ever was an opportunity for sabotage it should have occurred here.

There is no doubt that the internments were unjust and the fear of a fifth column was unfounded. The internees: "suffered the indignity of unfounded suspicion and

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<sup>465</sup> This was a favorite lunchtime story of Santamaria, repeated often.

<sup>466</sup> Report of Captain Hattam, Southern Command, June 24, 1940 (Appendix 5) *ibid*.

<sup>467</sup> *ibid*.

accusation of disloyalty to the British Empire, leading to the confiscation and loss of property and their livelihood.... Yet not one person was ever found guilty in a court of law of sabotage, sedition or treason.”<sup>470</sup>

The internments emerged out of racial fear and social exclusion. The evidence used to arrest Italians and the stigma of calling them “enemy aliens” and potential saboteurs was unfair and unjust, and yet we find no evidence of Santamaria challenging such injustices. Even though the term was legal in the strict sense of the word, as Italy was a country at war with Australia, the mistrust of Italians in Australia with the stigma of such a label was never challenged. For the young Santamaria, working for the National Catholic Rural Movement and for Catholic Action was a fine distraction to the problems of the Italian community. Many Italians were interned, and their cause was taken up by Archbishop Mannix, Fr Ugo Modotti and by some members of the Italian community. But Santamaria was notably absent in all of these endeavours.

This research study found only two instances of B.A. Santamaria making representation on behalf of migrants. This is, of course, in stark contrast to Valentino Adami who (along with Bill Fazio) became the legal representative for the internees in Victoria in the later established Alien Tribunals that determined, after 1941, who could be released and who couldn't.

The two cases of Santamaria assisting Italian migrants during this period are the cases of Charles Bogetti and Francesco Valente. In the first, Charles Bogetti, an Italian-born naturalised British citizen, wanted to purchase a property from his father in law in

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<sup>468</sup> *The Advocate*, June 13 1940. p.6.

<sup>469</sup> *The Advocate*, May 17 1940, p.13.

<sup>470</sup> L. Connors at el., *Australia's Frontline: Remembering the 1939-1945 War*, (UQP: St. Lucia, 1992), p.90.

Chiltern, Central Victoria. His father in law, Mr Cathro, was an Australian of an Anglo-Saxon background. But the authorities denied Bogetti permission on the grounds that he was a naturalised person of enemy origins.<sup>471</sup> Mrs Bogetti, wife of Charles Bogetti (who was of an Anglo-Saxon background) also attempted to purchase the property from her father but she was also refused because of her marriage to Charles Bogetti, a naturalised Australian of enemy origin.<sup>472</sup> The Bogettis and the Cathros appealed to their parish priest who in turn contacted Santamaria.<sup>473</sup> Santamaria, in writing to Hon. J. Scullin, about the case, emphasised that “of course there is little that I can do in the matter” and later on apologised “to trouble you in this matter.”<sup>474</sup> The Santamaria letter to Scullin, shows an uninterested Santamaria on the issue of the blatant racism of the Government policy.

In the Jesuit archives there is the case of Francesco Valente. A First World War veteran, Valente, because of his membership of the Italian ex-servicemen’s association was interned as soon as Italy entered the war. Ironically, Valente had served alongside the allies during the First World War. Francesco Valente was 49 years of age and according to his wife began to have stomach complaints as soon as he was interned. So concerned was Mrs Valente that she wrote to Archbishop Daniel Mannix requesting her husband be moved to a camp closer to Melbourne.<sup>475</sup> Archbishop Mannix passed the request to Modotti who passed it on to Santamaria. Santamaria then wrote to his personal friend Labor Minister H.R. Cremean. Cremean replied after speaking to the camp commander who took on an undertaking to look after Valente, but that was all he could do.<sup>476</sup> B.A.

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<sup>471</sup> National Security (Land Transfer) Regulations, L9360, Charles A.J. Bogetti. Australian Archives, Series 12217, L9360.

<sup>472</sup> National Security (Land Transfer) Regulations, L3823, Margaret Jean Bogetti. Australian Archives, Series 12217, L3823.

<sup>473</sup> The correspondence is found in the following file: Charles A.J. Bogetti- purchase of property, Chiltern, Victoria. A.A., A12217, L9360.

<sup>474</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Letter to Hon. J.H. Scullin, September 18 1945, (NCRM).

<sup>475</sup> Mrs. Valente to Daniel Mannix, undated c1940, (JPAM).

<sup>476</sup> Hon. Cremean to B.A. Santamaria, December 5 1940, (JPAM).

Santamaria then wrote to Modotti about the outcome of his intervention.<sup>477</sup> Santamaria's two notes on the matter were very brief and in his own handwriting. There is no evidence of Santamaria lobbying on their behalf; rather it seems he was a go-between, merely passing on messages.

Modotti on the other hand, having escaped arrest and having travel restrictions placed on him, nevertheless became the key player, working extensively for the welfare of the Italian community. Santamaria did concede in one interview that Modotti did ask for his help but he was unable to help: "He would regard me as a person who could help him simply because of that quasi-official position – I could not really help him very much."<sup>478</sup>

Modotti also, during this period, introduced the Virgona sisters to the Mannix household where they remained right until the Archbishop's end. The Virgona sisters "made appointments, decided who would see him, and if they thought he was too tired, they turned people away."<sup>479</sup> The Virgonas were friends of the Santamaria family and were also from the Aeolian Islands like the Santamarias. The friendship between the Virgona sisters and Archbishop Mannix is quite significant. All writings on Mannix have either ignored or understated this friendship.

According to Jean Virgona, Mannix had said to Father Modotti that he "was a hermit until Jean and Lena had come ..."<sup>480</sup> while Jean Virgona stated that Mannix was their life and that something about him inspired more than loyalty.<sup>481</sup> These sentiments were

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<sup>477</sup> B.A. Santamaria to Hugh Modotti, December 11 1940, (JPAM).

<sup>478</sup> B.A. Santamaria interview with Rob Pascoe, op.cit.

<sup>479</sup> Michael Gilchrist, *Daniel Mannix: Priest and Patriot*, (Collins Dove: Blackburn, 1982), p.228

<sup>480</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>481</sup> *ibid.*

similar to those of Father Modotti who in 1945 recalled his loyalty and friendship to Archbishop Mannix.<sup>482</sup>

During 1942 to 1945 these people were Mannix's closest companions: Father Modotti, Lena and Jean Virgona and B.A. Santamaria; a very Italian household.

During the war years B.A. Santamaria argues in *Against the Tide* that he dedicated himself to the work of the National Catholic Rural Movement.<sup>483</sup> Critics of B.A. Santamaria, on the other hand, argue that: "by 1945 Santamaria had laid the groundwork for the Movement... one might speculate whether the fruit harvest role was more nominal than actual."<sup>484</sup>

With B.A. Santamaria away from Melbourne travelling across regional Victoria with the NCRM, Modotti teamed up with another Aeolian, Angelina Santospirito. She became the president of the "Archbishop's Committee for Italian Relief", whose work went way beyond just assisting the internees and their families. The Committee was to continue well after the war in assisting Italian migrants coming to Australia. In fact, Angelina Santospirito remained president of the Committee until 1953.<sup>485</sup> The irony of the Archbishop's Committee and its tireless work was its close association not with B.A. Santamaria, but with Arthur Calwell, Immigration Minister in the Labor Party: "She was always very grateful to Mr Calwell for this guidance and support and prompt attention to her enquiries and problems. Often Mr Calwell would be in Canberra so this meant long

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<sup>482</sup> Ugo Modotti, Letter to his Provincial, December 31 1945, (JAMP).

<sup>483</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.49.

<sup>484</sup> Paul Ormonde, "An Authoritarian Man", *Santamaria: Politics of Fear*, (Spectrum: Melbourne, 2000), p.103.

<sup>485</sup> Maria Santospirito Triaca, "My Mother: La Mamma Degli Italiani", *Italian Historical Journal*, November 1990, Vol.1, No.4, p.7.



conversations with Mrs Calwell who became great friends and they often talked late into the night. This continued until they were fairly aged and ill-health prevented it.”<sup>486</sup>

Even in his interview with Pascoe, B.A. Santamaria recounts very little about the “Archbishop’s Committee for Italian Relief” only that Mrs Santospirito was “the very backbone of the Archbishop’s Committee for Italian Relief and that was really the most significant thing that was happening in that period.”<sup>487</sup>

It was also during this period that B.A. Santamaria began the Movement – the Catholic Social Studies Movement. According to Santamaria it was: “H.M. Cremean...[who] persuaded me that the Communist problem was much more than a generalised philosophic or ideological challenge... He suggested that I should approach Archbishop Mannix.”<sup>488</sup> And Santamaria continues: “To begin our work, we sought out a few men with knowledge of trade union affairs. The initial meeting of the organization, later known as the ‘the Movement’ which was held on 14 August 1941, had only four people present... The next meeting brought together about twenty unionists....”<sup>489</sup>

While the Movement was beginning with Santamaria at the helm the Italian POWs arrived to Australia from Europe and the Middle East. The Australian government was asked to take Italian POWs by Great Britain. The rationale was that these POWs, being based in Australia, would find it difficult to escape. As a result, arriving from September 1940 were Italian POWs who, during the war years, were to number 18,500. The last of these POWs were repatriated as late as 1947.

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<sup>486</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>487</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview with Robert Pascoe, *op.cit.*

<sup>488</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.73.

With the Movement, the NCRM and Catholic Action, B.A. Santamaria had become a major player within the Church in a short period of time. All this was occurring while Fr Modotti was busy dedicating himself to the ever demanding needs of the Italian community as well as having to contend with Italian POWs.

Santamaria meanwhile, in 1943, began his second journal, *Freedom*, which became the official organ of the Movement. Through *Freedom*, in 1943, B.A. Santamaria called for Granger type homesteads to be incorporated in a plan proposed by the aluminium works in Wangaratta. The works were looking to open a plant in Wangaratta and would employ 3000 people and since no arrangements for accommodation had been made, *Freedom* argued: “This is a splendid opportunity to set up a homestead farm settlement on the lines of the highly successful Granger project in IOWA, America.”<sup>490</sup>

In Italy on July 10, 1943 the Fascist Grand Council in Italy dismissed Mussolini as the leader of Italy. Mussolini was immediately arrested and imprisoned. The allied forces had occupied Southern Italy and Marshal Pietro Badoglio, successor to Mussolini, opened talks with the allies following which he signed an armistice with the allies. With Germany occupying the North of Italy and Mussolini rescued by the Germans and installed as a puppet leader of the Nazi occupied north of Italy, Italy seemed to be heading for civil war.

Back in Melbourne the news brought relief to many internees who now hoped for an early release from their detention. Archbishop Mannix used the overseas events to conduct a meeting with the Italian community at the Cathedral hall, in North Fitzroy.

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<sup>489</sup> *ibid.* p.76

<sup>490</sup> *Freedom*, December 4 1943, p.1. Granger homesteads had been a successful venture by Italian-American priest Mgr Luigi Ligutti.

More than 1200 Italians attended. The Archbishop first addressed the people, as did Fr. Modotti followed by Labor MP, Arthur Calwell. During his speech, Calwell criticized the Australian government's handling of the Italians and compared the situation to the United States of America where Italians were never treated as badly as they were in Australia. Calwell saw the internments as an injustice and spoke about his disapproval.<sup>491</sup> Also present at the meeting, amongst the crowd, were members of the Italian-Australian anti-fascist Movement, *Italia Libera* (MIL). It seems by the newspaper reports that B.A. Santamaria was not present at the meeting.

At the meeting, according to the Melbourne newspaper *The Argus*, Mannix stated that: "history will call him [Mussolini] one of the big men of the century. Like many other big men he seems to have failed."<sup>492</sup> The same speech was reported in the *Advocate*.<sup>493</sup> In his book, *Fascism, Anti-Fascism and Italians in Australia*, Gianfranco Cresciani, oddly, claims that Mannix said the following: "I say that Mussolini is the greatest man living today. His will go down in history as the greatest Government Italy has ever had. The cultural, educational civilization created by him, Italy and the world will always admire and hold it as the greatest in the history of the globe."<sup>494</sup>

Did Archbishop Mannix make such a speech? Cresciani's quote comes from the minutes of an MIL meeting.<sup>495</sup> It seems unlikely that Mannix would make such a statement and not be reported in any other paper. Mannix had never been a supporter of Mussolini, in contrast to Duhig who in 1943 was still finding a good word for Mussolini and insisting

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<sup>491</sup> Graham Freudenberg, "Calwell, Arthur Augustus (1896 - 1973)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 13, (MUP: Melbourne, 1993), pp.341-342.

<sup>492</sup> *The Argus*, September 13 1943, p.4.

<sup>493</sup> *The Advocate*, September 23 1943, p.4.

<sup>494</sup> Cresciani, *op.cit.* p.210.

<sup>495</sup> *ibid.* 219n.

that he was not in the same category as Hitler.<sup>496</sup> Secondly, such a speech in its controversial form would almost certainly have been reported in the *The Age*, *The Argus*, *Melbourne Truth* or even *Smith's Weekly*, but all seem not to mention it. It seems that the only people to have heard the speech in its controversial form were the MIL.<sup>497</sup>

Santamaria himself does make an interesting admission about the time when Italy surrendered in Europe. In a letter to James Gobbo in 1990 Santamaria states: "I am not ashamed to say that on the day Italy finally surrendered in World War II, I shed tears. Yet I knew, whatever I might feel, my primary duty was to this country."<sup>498</sup>

With fascism gone and with Russia siding with the allies in the European war, Communism was attempting to win the hearts of the Italian migrants. For the Catholic Church, this interest in Communism became a major concern. For the Italian chaplains, Communist influence amongst the Italian migrants had to be stopped.

In Sydney, Fr Giuseppe La Rosa had teamed up with the Movement chaplain, Fr. Paddy Ryan, and with him worked out a program to reform the Italian Catholic apostolate. The plan included: "Foundation of a Catholic Association, open to young people in particular, to develop initiatives aimed at increasing the faith and calculated to keep alive the noble traditions of Italian life and culture" as well as "Publication of a newspaper which... would provide a vehicle for dissemination in matters of culture and faith and an instrument for the defence of our people's Christian values and ideals."<sup>499</sup> In Melbourne,

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<sup>496</sup> T.P. Boland, *James Dubig* (UQP: St Lucia, 1986), p.303.

<sup>497</sup> For more about this infamous speech see: A. Cappello, "Mannix and Mussolini: A Note?" *The Australasian Catholic Record*, January 2001, Vol.78, No.1, pp.91-92.

<sup>498</sup> B.A. Santamaria to Sir James Gobbo, September 25, 1990, letter cited in full, Morgan, *op.cit.* p.477.

<sup>499</sup> Fr Giuseppe La Rosa, "Ten Years Among the Italians in Australia 1939-1949, translated by Barbara McGilvray, In *L'Apostolato de P. Giuseppe La Rosa in Australia*, a cura di Domenico La Rosa (Italian Historical Society: Sydney 1995) p.173.

Modotti also concerned himself with the Communist threat and he teamed up with B.A. Santamaria.

The MIL, on the other hand, saw Modotti as their biggest obstacle. He was according to them a “member of OVRA” (the Italian Fascist secret police),<sup>500</sup> while other anti-communist priests like Fr La Rosa and the Apostolic Delegate were seen as friendly and to be welcomed to the MIL committee.<sup>501</sup> According to the MIL, Modotti along with Catholic Action, (which the MIL believed was headed by Calwell) were responsible for waging a war on them.<sup>502</sup> Yet, it may have been Catholic Action under Santamaria and Modotti that were combating the MIL.

At the same 1943 meeting at Cathedral hall, previously mentioned several paragraphs before, it was announced that Gualtiero Vaccari would be Italian Liaison Officer. This position was a quasi-Consular position, a go-between the Italian community and the Australian Government departments. If that wasn't enough bad news for the MIL with Vaccari's appointment (a position they had wanted), things got worse when Calwell spoke out against them at the meeting. To the Italia Libera Movement, there was a conspiracy.<sup>503</sup> The appointment of Vaccari came about after the letter was written by Mannix to the Prime Minister where he suggested, “pending the appointment of Consuls, the Government would appoint an Italian as an accredited liaison officer between the Government and the Italian community.”<sup>504</sup> At no point in the letter did Mannix suggest Mr Vaccari as the suitable person. The appointment came from within

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<sup>500</sup> Tom Saviane to Matteo Christofaro, September 29 1944, Italia Libera Papers 1942-1945, Mitchell Library, NSW.

<sup>501</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>502</sup> Tom Saviane to M. Montagnana, December 30 1943, Italia Libera Papers, 1942-1945, Mitchell Library, NSW.

<sup>503</sup> M. Montagnana to Tom Saviane, undated 1943, Italia Libera Papers, 1942-1945, Mitchell Library, NSW.

<sup>504</sup> Archbishop Mannix to The Right Honourable John Curtin, Sept 13, 1940.3, A.A., A1608, AA19/1/1.

the Security services to which Vaccari had been useful before the war in gathering information.<sup>505</sup>

Was Santamaria involved at all in opposing the Italia Libera Movement? The answer is yes. Writing to former Prime Minister and Labor Minister James Scullin in July 1945, B.A. Santamaria outlined the problem of the two major figures in the Italia Libera Movement, notably Dr Adriano Muggia and Claudio Alcorso. In the letter, B.A. Santamaria writes "...both are refugees from Italy who came out to this country following upon the promulgation of anti-Semitic laws by Mussolini. However, Muggia is not a Jew.... Muggia was a Brigadier-General in the medical section of the Fascist Militia, which was the core of Italian fascism.... Alcorso is reputed to have been not only a prominent Fascist in Italy, but also more closely connected with Mussolini's own household. He was a friend of Count Ciano".<sup>506</sup>

With these fascist connections, B.A. Santamaria concluded in his letter: "if this information is accurate... I think we can win a major propaganda victory over the Communist Party in this country. It would not be difficult to show that the Communist Party is working in close collaboration with men whose record in fascism in Italy speaks so eloquently."<sup>507</sup>

Not only was Santamaria informing the Australian authorities of the activities of the MIL, but he was also looking to employ an organiser to help Modotti with the task. In a letter from Paolo Magi, a former internee and close friend of Fr Modotti, to Italian POW, Dr G. Boggio, Magi writes:

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<sup>505</sup> H. Evatt to Prime Minister, John Curtin, September 19 1943, A.A., A1608, 19/1/1.

<sup>506</sup> B.A. Santamaria, letter to Mr J.H. Scullin, July 25 1945, NCRM.

<sup>507</sup> *ibid.*

I spoke yesterday with Fr Modotti... In the afternoon we went to see Mr Bob Santamaria, a man of about thirty years of age... and I believe that he is shortly to enter the political field.... As soon as he had read your references and qualifications he said (I quote his exact words): “You must ask permission to go and see him. I know the places where he got these references. This is the man I should like to meet and have with me.... I shall give him an office in my building. You must do something at once for this man.” He said to give you, 10 to 15 pounds per week.<sup>508</sup>

The letter states that Santamaria was about to enter politics. Santamaria in *Against the Tide* writes about his near pre-selection when the secretaries of the two Labor branches in Brunswick approached Santamaria’s father in 1941 “to see whether I would be prepared to nominate for Labor endorsement.”<sup>509</sup> There is also the recollection of Nino Randazzo. Randazzo, who was a frequent visitor to the Santamaria household, remembers “long conversations with Bob’s father” whom he called Uncle Joe. Randazzo recalls on “one occasion with a hint disappointment he told me about the missed opportunity of a parliamentary career for his son. He said something along these lines: ‘The Archbishop, Mannix, sent Fr Modotti to persuade Bob to avoid the temptation of entering parliament...’”<sup>510</sup>

The other episode involving Santamaria was his involvement in starting a newspaper to combat the newspaper of the MIL, *Il Risveglio*.

## L’UNITA

The MIL emerged with their Italian journal called *Il Risveglio*: translated as “The Awakening” in November 1944. Its purpose was to fight against fascism abroad and in

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<sup>508</sup> P. Magi to Dr G. Boggio, May 31 1945, A.A., A367/1, C62490.

<sup>509</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.83

Australia. However, it clearly emerged as a vehicle to promote communism and socialism among Italian migrants.<sup>511</sup> The Australian authorities encouraged the distribution of *Il Risveglio* within the POW and internment camps in the hope that the Italian prisoners would shake off their fascist ideals by reading such material on the opposite end of the political spectrum.<sup>512</sup>

However, the anti-clericalism of this newspaper ultimately disturbed many members of the Italian community, both POWs and those left in internment; so much so that Father Ugo Modotti, Giuseppe Briglia, Paolo Magi and Denys Jackson (who wrote for the *Advocate* and the *Catholic Tribune*) and B.A. Santamaria came together to form an alternative journal. Santamaria himself wrote to the Prime Minister stating that: “You remember that some time ago I was in communication with you concerning the newspaper *Risveglio* published by the Italia Libera Movement. I sent you translations of some excerpts from this paper...”<sup>513</sup> Following their meeting they proposed that they should begin an alternative Italian Australian paper to be called *L’Unità*, Unity.

In April 1945, Giuseppe Briglia wrote to the Minister of Trade and Customs, Hon. R.V. Keane, regarding a license to publish *L’Unità*.<sup>514</sup> The Australian authorities were cautious about this endeavor yet they had no hesitation in granting *Il Risveglio* a license. Omero Schiassi of the MIL had got permission after meeting with Allan Dalziel, Dr Evatt’s personal secretary.<sup>515</sup> Briglia, in requesting his license, gave particulars on *L’Unità*, stating

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<sup>510</sup> Randazzo, *op.cit.* p.116.

<sup>511</sup> One just has to read about the formation of the Italia Libera Movement to clearly see that it had an agenda. All parties who came to form the Italia Libera Movement came from Communist and radical socialist organizations, united under the guise of anti-fascism. See G. Cresciani. *Fascism, Antifascism and Italians in Australia 1922 to 1945*, (ANU Press: Canberra, 1980) Pp.197-202. Cresciani himself admits to it being a left-wing organization, p. 214, while on the earlier anti-fascist movement before the war, Cresciani states that the aim of the Movement was to “attracts Italians in to the Communist Party”, p.120.

<sup>512</sup> Major H. Scudds to Security Service, Adelaide, July 5 1945, A.A., MP742/1, 175/1/149.

<sup>513</sup> B.A. Santamaria, letter to J.H. Scullin, July 26 1945. NCC.

<sup>514</sup> Mr. G. Briglia to Sen. Hon. R.V. Keane, Canberra, April 18 1945, AA, A/367/1, C1822/31.

<sup>515</sup> C. Alcorso, *The Wind you Say*, (Angus and Robertson: Pymble, 1993), p.75.



that the paper would be eight pages, with four in English and four in Italian. He also estimated that its circulation would be sixteen thousand copies, which would require a total annual quota of twenty tons of newsprint.<sup>516</sup> Briglia stated, as a reason for starting *L'Unità*, that it would “propagate Christian views and give to the Italian people a true prospective of current happenings as well as a knowledge of economical and social doctrine in general.”<sup>517</sup> In fact, its aims were not far removed from *Freedom's*.

Furthermore, stated Briglia, because *Il Risveglio* had disgusted the Italian community with its anti-religious articles, *L'Unità* would restore some orthodoxy for them. And since permission had been given to *Il Risveglio* with its “un-Australian” views there was no reason why *L'Unità* should be denied.<sup>518</sup>

The authorities, however, deferred granting *L'Unità* a license on the grounds of its use of a foreign language as well as the lack of newsprint. Briglia replied immediately asking that consideration be given as soon as newsprint became available.<sup>519</sup> Meanwhile Modotti began to seek writers for *L'Unità*. B.A. Santamaria was already confirmed as a contributor, as well as Paolo Magi, Dr. Giorgio Boggio and Val Adami. However, Boggio, although keen to help, stated that his area of expertise was Mathematics.<sup>520</sup>

Inspector Hattam of the Commonwealth Investigation Bureau, meanwhile, began to investigate the backgrounds of all the parties involved with *L'Unità*. He found that none of the parties involved was in any way a risk to Australia's security.<sup>521</sup> Both Giuseppe Santamaria and Giuseppe Briglia had sons fighting with the Australian army and Briglia

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<sup>516</sup> Mr. G. Briglia to Sen. Hon. R.V. Keane, Canberra, April 18, 1945. AA, A/367/1, C1822/31.

<sup>517</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>518</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>519</sup> Hon. J.A. Beasley to G. Briglia, May 22 1945., AA, A367/1, C62490.

<sup>520</sup> Dr. G. Boggio to Rev. Hugh Modotti, May 31 1945, A.A., A367/1, C62490.

<sup>521</sup> D.A. Alexander to the Director, C.I.B. November 7 1945, A.A., A367/1, C1822/31.

had lost one of them in combat.<sup>522</sup> In spite of this, the Commonwealth Investigation Service and the Department of External Affairs declined their request, despite Hattam's conclusion that *L'Unità* was "actuated by a sincere desire to combat certain articles now being printed and circulated by... *Il Risveglio*" and that certainly *Il Risveglio* was of a leftist nature.<sup>523</sup>

No adequate reason was offered, but Inspector Hattam did propose a further report on the activities of *Il Risveglio*. Inspector D.A. Alexander of the Commonwealth Investigation Bureau carried out this investigation and his subsequent report came out in support of the publication, *Il Risveglio*. D.A. Alexander of the Commonwealth Investigation Branch, found that no article in *Il Risveglio* advocated the Communist ideology and that it was not at all radical.<sup>524</sup> Santamaria also noted in his letter that Newsletter Printery, which published *Il Risveglio* was recently purchased by the Communist party of Australia.<sup>525</sup>

The Italian community, however, became the jury on *Il Risveglio*. As long as it remained the only Italian newspaper in circulation it continued to be read. But in 1949, when Fr Giuseppe La Rosa resurrected the *L'Unità* idea by publishing *La Fiamma* to combat "the poisonous influence of a leftist and pro-Communist Italian newspaper..." *Il Risveglio* died from irrelevance.<sup>526</sup>

*La Fiamma*'s initial editor was Fr Giuseppe La Rosa. Fr La Rosa, an Italian born priest who was visiting his brother in Griffith when war broke out and therefore remained in Australia, reproduces an interesting letter in full about his work in starting *La Fiamma*.

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<sup>522</sup> Inspector E. Hattam to Director C.I.B., August 22 1945. A.A., A367/1, C1822/31.

<sup>523</sup> D.A. Alexander to the Director, C.I.B. November 7 1945, A.A., A367/1, C1822/31.

<sup>524</sup> D.A. Alexander to the Director C.I.B. ACT November 7 1945, *ibid*.

The letter was a reply to a letter sent to him by B.A. Santamaria. La Rosa replied to Santamaria's letter by writing the following:

It was indeed gratifying to me to hear that you were prepared to give your contribution to the paper which I was editing and I fully appreciate your generous interest in my effort of making "la Fiamma" a genuine vehicle of Christian thought for Italians in Australia... I hope therefore that this work may be continued later, in the way in which even Father Modotti thought would better serve the needs of the Italian community.<sup>527</sup>

The MIL failed to win the hearts of the Italian community and the reason for this was not because of the anti-communist efforts of Fr Modotti and more remotely B.A.

Santamaria. The reason as argued by James Gobbo was that: "It fell right away. In part, this may be due to its imported, almost paranoid anti-clericalism..."<sup>528</sup>

Interestingly, it was B.A. Santamaria not his father who was involved in the planning of *L'Unita*. Giuseppe Santamaria is hardly mentioned. At the same period B.A. Santamaria even prevented his father taking on roles within the Italian community as was the case in 1945 with Mannix's "Archbishop's Committee for Italian Relief". Santamaria informed businessman Gualtiero Vaccari from the committee, that his father was unable to give a hand on the grounds of a heart ailment. Vaccari, on the other hand, was hoping that B.A. Santamaria, himself would volunteer in his place. But this was not to happen.<sup>529</sup>

Back in 1944, Modotti, along with Archbishop Mannix revived the *Opera* and he gathered B.A. Santamaria, Giuseppe Santamaria, Giuseppe Briglia, Dr. Soccorso Santoro and Giovanni Baptista Stella in 1945 to discuss how they were going to help with the

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<sup>525</sup> B.A. Santamaria to J. H. Scullin, July 26 1945. (NCC).

<sup>526</sup> Cresciani, *Migrants or Mates*, p.243.

<sup>527</sup> Giuseppe La Rosa to B.A. Santamaria, February 3 1948, reproduced in full in Domenico La Rosa, *L'Apostolato di Giuseppe La Rosa in Australia*. (Italian Historical Society: Sydney, 1995), p.37.

<sup>528</sup> Gobbo, op.cit. p.14.

<sup>529</sup> Mr G.Vaccari, letter to A.A. Calwell, September, 11 1945. Vaccari papers, copy supplied by Mr Franco Vaccari.

religious task of looking after the mass migration of Italians, which was anticipated.<sup>530</sup>

Some meetings were held at Giuseppe Santamaria's house.<sup>531</sup> Amongst Italians in Australia, rumours of family reunions and repatriations of Italians to Australia spread fast and Modotti was the man to approach, as evidenced in letters as early as 1942: "Fr. Modotti is here for the apostleship of the Italians, a holy spiritual mission which bears great fruit. When peace comes... he will carry on this work in the North also...".<sup>532</sup> Dr Poldy writing in 1944 stated: "Australia is preparing to undertake immigration on a vast scale. Regarding your case in particular I spoke to Padre Jesuit Ugo Modotti. ... and he has promised that he will take up your interests...."<sup>533</sup>

The foundations of the Australian Church were going to change. The *Opera*-like Catholic Action would be directed in Melbourne by Fr Modotti, Archbishop Mannix and Catholic Action. For Santamaria and for the Movement these new migrants through the work of the *Opera* could be recruited into the Movement and Santamaria was already looking for an organiser to do this work within the *Opera*.

With Mannix and Modotti re-establishing the *Opera*, initially launched in May 1940, through the purchase of a house in Hawthorn, the Apostolic Delegate, Giovanni Panico, in order to weaken Mannix, had to stop Modotti and his *Opera*. Archbishop John Panico had been sent to Australia with the task of ending the Irish dominance of the Australian Church by the Irish bishops, in particular, Archbishops Daniel Mannix, James Duhig and Michael Kelly.<sup>534</sup>

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<sup>530</sup> A. S. Cappello, "Aspects of Italian Catholic Life in Melbourne with special references to the political convictions of its Chaplain's, 1919 to 1945" Yarra Theological Union, Melbourne, 1995, pp.78-83.

<sup>531</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>532</sup> Extract from Post and Telegraph Censorship Bulletin No.16, M.F. Toal to F. Bocchino, September 11 1942, A.A., A367/1, C62490.

<sup>533</sup> Dr. J.J. Poldy to Egr. Dott. Gerolamo Leda, December 17 1944, *ibid.*

<sup>534</sup> D. Valli, *Emigrante per Amore Il Cardinale Giovanni Panico da Tricase a Sydney 1895-1948*, (Congedo: Tricase, 1998) p.132.

In Adelaide on September 29 1944, Panico attended a bishop's meeting where Modotti proposed the *Opera Religiosa Italiana* to the Australian bishops. All the bishops agreed except for Panico who argued that it “would not meet the spiritual needs of the Italians”.<sup>535</sup> The real reason, however, for his objection was the mere fact that the idea came from Modotti and therefore from Mannix. Modotti had been in Adelaide for the previous four weeks working closely with the Archbishop of Adelaide, Matthew Beovich, on an Italian mission. After the Adelaide meeting Panico made alternative arrangements. He invited the Capuchin fathers to Australia to work with the Italian community, as he skilfully asserted in a letter to Matthew Beovich, Archbishop of Adelaide, only a fortnight after the meeting:

It may be of interest to you to know that the Archbishop of Sydney has allowed the Franciscan Fathers to have a new foundation in the Archdiocese of Sydney... You will be further interested to know that I have another plan .... for the assistance of Italians in the whole of Queensland.... As for your Archdiocese... it would be good for a Salesian Father to be brought out....<sup>536</sup>

Thus by these actions, Panico was isolating Mannix from working with the Italian community. The Capuchins themselves recall that their invitation to work amongst the Italians came thanks to the "enthusiasm and encouragement of His Excellency John Panico.”<sup>537</sup> In 1944 Panico “had approached the Archbishop of Brisbane, Sir James Duhig and had suggested to him to ask the Capuchins to send some Italian priests....”<sup>538</sup> Panico had jumped the gun and put in place a counter plan to that of the *Opera* by inviting the Capuchins to Australia. This alternative plan of Panico was immediately set in motion and now moved to end the *Opera*. According to Father Meagher, the Jesuit Provincial for Australia, if Modotti were not successful with the *Opera* then the order

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<sup>535</sup> Giovanni Panico to Archbishop Matthew Beovich, October 16, 1944, Brisbane Catholic Archives, copy provided to the author by T.P. Boland.

<sup>536</sup> *ibid.*

would abandon the Italian apostolate.<sup>539</sup> Panico was aware of the *Opera's* dependence on Modotti, and quickly intensified his actions to stop Modotti becoming settled in Australia. This he could have done in two ways. First, by preventing Modotti becoming a naturalised Australian citizen. Then Modotti needed permission from the Australian authorities to travel to Italy. Once in Italy, Modotti needed approval from the Jesuits as well as additional priests from Italy to return with him to Australia. Prevention of his return from Italy would end the *Opera* and implement Panico's counter plan. For Santamaria, the *Opera* would ensure members for the Movement's work and hence its importance.

Mannix, knowing the urgency of the *Opera*, met with the Provincial of the Jesuits in Australia, Fr. John Meagher on October 16, 1944. At the meeting Mannix informed Fr. Meagher that the time for Italian Jesuits working with the Italian community had presented itself, "therefore" as Meagher noted in his letter to the Vicar-General of the Jesuits worldwide, Fr. Norbert de Boynes, "the Archbishop asks that our order should set up a community of Italian priests for the Melbourne diocese in this house."<sup>540</sup>

Secondly, Mannix wrote to Dr. Evatt, Attorney General of the Australian Commonwealth Government, asking for permission for Modotti to travel to Rome for the purpose of finding priests: "It is my desire to send Rev. Hugh Modotti to Rome on a special mission in connection with his work for the Italian Community. Father Modotti's mission would be to bring from Italy some priests who would be suitable for the work among the Italians in Australia."<sup>541</sup> Fr. Meagher, however, had noticed opposition from the Apostolic Delegate, who according to Meagher, "completely misunderstands

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<sup>537</sup> "Celebrating 50 years of Capuchin Presence in Australia," *Sandal Print*, Vol.32, September 1995, p.1.

<sup>538</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>539</sup> Fr Meagher to Rev. Dughe, January 22 1945, A.A., A367/1, C62490.

<sup>540</sup> J. Meagher SJ to Fr. N. de Boynes SJ, October 27 1944, A.A., A367/1, C62490.

<sup>541</sup> Dr. Mannix to Hon. H.V. Evatt, Attorney General, November 23 1944, *ibid.*

Modotti."<sup>542</sup> Furthermore Meagher also noted that if Father Modotti failed to find priests this would "displease Dr. Mannix and many bishops... on the other hand..." the Apostolic Delegate would be "pleased."<sup>543</sup>

With the help of Archbishop Mannix and Federal Minister Arthur Calwell, Father Modotti applied for naturalisation. Notwithstanding, there were delays in the process because, according to W.B Simpson, Modotti had not handed in his application forms.<sup>544</sup> Carlo Simeoni of the MIL wrote a protest letter against Modotti's application for naturalisation in the classified section of *the Argus*. Nevertheless, according to a telegram dated August 28, 1945, Modotti was granted naturalisation.<sup>545</sup> Therefore, in January 1946 when departing for Italy on his *Opera* mission, Father Ugo Modotti was a naturalized Australian citizen.

With naturalisation granted, the *Opera* looked to be on track. If the *Opera* was to be successful, working class Italian migrants would be trained as cadres and made into Movement operatives. The *Opera* with Catholic Action and the Movement would be unstoppable. With no outside political interference, the potential for the Movement and Santamaria to use these migrants looked unlimited.

Despite the plans of Mannix, Fr Modotti and Santamaria, it was A.A. Calwell who indirectly prevented Modotti from returning to Australia.

In December 1945, Pope Pius XII appointed thirty new Cardinals and in Australia

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<sup>542</sup> J. Meagher, SJ, to Rev. Dughe, SJ, January 22 1945, *ibid*.

<sup>543</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>544</sup> W.B. Simpson to Acting Secretary, Department of Immigration, August 28 1945. *ibid*.

<sup>545</sup> For a copy of the telegram see Anthony Cappello, "Capuchin or Jesuit," *Italian Historical Journal*, Volume 4, No.2, July-December 1996, p. 8. See also "Cablegram, Department of External Affairs", October 19 1945, A.A., A1064/4, IC45/22/2/3.

the younger Norman Gilroy was appointed Cardinal instead of Mannix. His nomination came from Panico. Mannix, his senior, had been overlooked. In a move that would ultimately embarrass Mannix, Arthur Calwell in a bitter overreaction issued a statement on December 24, 1945 in which he stated:

The news that Archbishop Gilroy has been created a Cardinal will be received with very mixed feelings by Australian Catholics. While there will be congratulations for the new Cardinal, widespread consternation and bitter resentment will be felt that the honour which rightly belongs to the Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr Mannix, should have gone elsewhere, and to quite a comparatively junior member of the Australian hierarchy... Unfortunately, during the years, the Vatican has had to depend on a representative whose limited ability and equally limited knowledge of Australia and Australians has ill-fitted him to influence the destinies of the Australian church. If the Catholic Church in this country has come to age to the extent that she can now claim an Australian-born Cardinal, the time is surely ripe when she should have an Australian-born Apostolic Delegate. For reasons which appear to me to be valid, I hope that Archbishop Panico's influence in Australian church politics, and in Australian affairs generally, will cease with his early return to Rome.<sup>546</sup>

It was the comments that would close the door on Modotti's return to Australia as well as any hopes for the success of the Opera. It also ended Santamaria's attempt to recruit these migrants in the Opera into the Movement. Modotti when in Rome in 1946 had to defend himself before the Pope against the accusation that he had inspired the above comments of Calwell. Father Norbert de Boynes, General of the Jesuits, told Calwell in a letter that "certain criticisms were made to me concerning him [Fr. Modotti] and his work in Australia; amongst these was the suggestion that he inspired your statement of December 1945...."<sup>547</sup> Calwell, in an attempt to amend the situation wrote to Fr. Norbert de Boynes appealing on Modotti's behalf. De Boynes, however, replied by arguing that the matter had passed onto the Secretary of the State, who was the Pope himself.<sup>548</sup> Modotti's superiors in Italy, upon his arrival in Rome, placed him on the staff

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<sup>546</sup> Calwell, *op.cit.* pp.128-129.

<sup>547</sup> N. de Boynes SJ to A.A. Calwell, October 22 1946, Calwell Papers, (a copy provided by M.E. Calwell)

<sup>548</sup> *ibid.*



of Vatican Radio, preventing his return to Australia and ending the establishment of *Opera*.

The Jesuits, as they had already indicated they would, without Modotti's return abandoned the *Opera* and the Italian chaplaincy. With Panico's success in implementing the Roman policy the bitterness and dislike of the Apostolic Delegate came to a head. It comes as no surprise that at the Second Vatican Council, some twenty years later, the Australian bishops were still outspoken towards the role and significance of the office of the Apostolic Delegate, arguing that they had little time for Delegates at all.<sup>549</sup>

Santamaria maintained contact with Modotti, by sending him newspaper clippings.<sup>550</sup> But Modotti was never to return to Australia. Back in Italy Fr Modotti wrote to Angelina Santospirito stating that they had very good reason to thank God as the Christian Democrats had won the election.<sup>551</sup> In 1948, Modotti worked against the Protestant infiltration at the University in Buenos Aires.<sup>552</sup> In 1950, Modotti left the Jesuits and joined the Camaldolese order in Arezzo Italy. The Camaldolese were an order of hermit contemplatives. Then in 1959 as a Camaldolese, Modotti and the monk Don Aliprando Catani set out for the United States to lay the foundation of the first Contemplative Hermitage in the United States. Such was his character that when the two monks became penniless and were on the brink of failure, Catani returned to Arezzo, but Modotti continued. Eventually, Modotti found a site at Big Sur, California and he also found a benefactor, Henry Paul,<sup>553</sup> and with his financial donation, the first foundation was laid

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<sup>549</sup> Xavier Rynne, "Letters from the Vatican", Destination Vatican II, CD-ROM, (Thomas More: Allen, 1997).

<sup>550</sup> Letter from Modotti to Santospirito, 21 June 1946, Santospirito papers, Italian Historical Society, Carlton.

<sup>551</sup> *Central Californian Register*, December 16 1971, (newspaper clipping)

<sup>552</sup> Father Robert Hale, letter to the author, March 4 1998, (ACA).

<sup>553</sup> Thomas Matus, *Nazarena: an American Anchoress*, (Paulist Press: New York, 1998) pp. 64-65.

<sup>554</sup> Ugo Modotti to Lena Santospirito, June 6, 1946, Santospirito papers, Italian Historical Society, Carlton.

<sup>555</sup> *Central Californian Register*, December 16 1971, (newspaper clipping)

<sup>556</sup> Father Robert Hale, letter to the author, March 4 1998, (ACA).

in 1959. Yet, controversy seemed to be his shadow and in 1960, a dispute broke out between himself and the Superior General of the Order, who removed Modotti as Prior of the American order. On this occasion, however, the Vatican supported Modotti's case.<sup>554</sup> In 1960, Modotti left the Camaldolese and still as a priest was sent by Cardinal Montini to Puerto Rico where he founded the journal *El Debate* and became Rector of the Seminary of Ponce. In 1965, Modotti represented the Puerto Rican bishops on the commission looking at the first draft of the work on Deacons at the Second Vatican Council. Modotti was very much in favour of married deacons. Finally in 1966, he returned to United States and worked in a parish in Fresno, California, near the Monastery of Big Sur, California. He became a naturalized American citizen and incardinated into the diocese of Fresno. In June 1971, Modotti entered formal retirement. However, until the very end he was working with Father Hardon on a special commission on establishing a Catholic Media Organisation, a task allotted to him by Pope Paul VI. However two weeks later in December 1971, he died in his sleep.<sup>555</sup> His final resting place was at the Monastery at Big Sur, where a simple wooden cross bears the name Father Hugh Modotti

The significance of Modotti's overseas achievements was never noted by Santamaria. He never mentioned him, and never wrote about him. Modotti disappeared from the recollections of Santamaria. The only time that Santamaria admitted to knowing him was in two interviews, one with Robert Pascoe and one with the author. Panico, on the other hand, left Australia in 1947, but created panic in Ireland when reports came from Australia that Panico "was showing interest in the Dublin nunciature."<sup>556</sup> Unlike

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<sup>554</sup> Thomas Matus, *Nazarena: an American Anchoress*, (Paulist Press: New York, 1998) pp. 64-65. Thomas Matus does not even mention Modotti by name but rather states "a former Jesuit who, having lived for many years in Australia...".

<sup>555</sup> Fr Robert Hale, letter to the author, March 4 1998, (ACA).

<sup>556</sup> Dermot Keogh, *Ireland and the Vatican. The Politics and Diplomacy of Church-State Relations 1922-1960*, (Cork University Press: Cork, 1995), p.212.

Modotti, Santamaria remembers Panico and remembers him with an hostility: “Whatever Panico’s policy signified for the purely ecclesiastical aspects of the Church’s administration, its consequences for the lay Movement had the effect of a delayed time-bomb. The two decades of frustration which he was to experience in Melbourne was perhaps the most important single factor in Simond’s public campaign against Mannix’s policies in the 1950s.”<sup>557</sup>

Panico continued his surveillance in Australia particularly around the time of the Labor Party split. Writing in *Against the Tide*, Santamaria wrote about a visit of Bishop Doody of Armidale to Panico, which he visited en-route to USA. Panico was at that time the Papal Nuncio in Portugal. Bishop Doody, at dinner with Panico “expressed his deep concerns for the Church in Australia where, he said, an ambitious layman was using his influence over the ailing Archbishop to create what would inevitably be a schism.”<sup>558</sup>

At the same time, the Australian bishops were in Rome for their meeting with the Pope. It was at this meeting that Father Modotti gave a retreat for the Australian bishops.<sup>559</sup> After the retreat Bishop Stewart – staunch supporter of the Movement – asked Modotti to return to Australia and to work in his diocese.<sup>560</sup> Modotti refused the kind offer to come back to Australia. Also calling for Modotti’s return to Australia was Calwell. Yet we find no evidence of Santamaria calling for the return of Modotti.

## THE POST-WAR SANTAMARIA

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<sup>557</sup> Santamaria, *Daniel Mannix*, p.189.

<sup>558</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.225.

<sup>559</sup> Fr Modotti, letter to Angelina Santospirito, December 2, 1965, Santospirito Collection, IHS Carlton.

The end of the war brought new challenges to Australia: the first was the need for a population increase and hence a call for greater migration. The second was Communism, as Santamaria stated in 1947: “An examination of Red writing and practice in this country... discloses the following pattern: control of the individual key unions, use of their money, use of coercive power passed by the trade unions, the seizure of the central control of the Trade Union Movement, paralysis of the machinery of Government, a general strike and a violent revolution.”<sup>561</sup>

On population, Santamaria had earlier written in *Freedom* arguing that Australia needed a population of 30 million.<sup>562</sup> A fortnight later *Freedom* strongly criticised a governmental committee, which limited the terms of reference to include industrial workers from Britain. This, argued *Freedom*, was a calamity.<sup>563</sup>

Before Modotti left Australia, Italian POWs were writing to him asking for settlement in Australia rather than return home to Italy. Dr Boggio was one such POW who wrote to Modotti stating: “Permit me, therefore, to approach you directly, begging you to confirm the plan of which I have recently heard, in order that I may apply for release in this country.”<sup>564</sup>

In early 1945 B.A. Santamaria was already exploring rural settlements for migrants as a possible way forward in building the Australian population. In his book *The Earth Our Mother* he laid out a framework of rural settlements arguing that the “best kind of rural society, both from the economic and social viewpoints, consists of numerous

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<sup>560</sup> Angelina Santospirito, letter to Fr Modotti, undated (circa 1965) Santospirito Collection, IHS Carlton.

<sup>561</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “Industrial Peace in Australia”, *National Catholic Rural Movement- Eighth National Convention*, Bathurst NSW, September 15-19 1947, p.71

<sup>562</sup> *Freedom*, October 23, 1943, p.1.

<sup>563</sup> *Freedom*, November 6, 1943. p.4.

<sup>564</sup> Dr G Boggio to Rev . Modotti. May 31, 1945. A.A., A367/1, C62490.

independent family farms.”<sup>565</sup> In December 1945 Santamaria wrote to Victorian department of Labour wanting to know if there were any Victorian firms being established in rural areas.<sup>566</sup>

The concept was not new and the Second World War had demonstrated how successfully Italian migrants could work on the land particularly in rural Victoria. This was evident because of the work of the Italian POWs as demonstrated in a letter from the Prime Minister’s department:

The employment of the prisoners directly in rural work has materially assisted in the production of vital foodstuffs required by the Government, and, in addition, their useful occupation in such work, without guards, represents a saving of manpower that would be required to guard them if they were to be held in concentration camps.<sup>567</sup>

The efforts of Italian POWs during the war years – as documented by Alan Fitzgerald in *The Italian farming soldiers: prisoners of war in Australia, 1941-1947* – demonstrated how successfully Italian migrants could work on the land as Fitzgerald argues:

Australia, suffering a severe shortage of manpower, gave the prisoners the opportunity to work unguarded on farms in 1943 and for thousands of prisoners involved, life became more bearable despite the language difficulties and the restraints on their freedom. For many of their Australian employers... the Italians proved hard workers and entertaining companions, some of whom immigrated to Australia after their repatriation.<sup>568</sup>

B.A. Santamaria while working in rural areas with the National Catholic Rural Movement would have seen first hand the Italian POWs, although nowhere in his writings or his speeches does he acknowledge or mention them. If he didn’t see them, Fr Modotti in all

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<sup>565</sup> B.A. Santamaria *The Earth, Our Mother*, p.51.

<sup>566</sup> B.A. Santamaria to The Secretary, Victorian Department of Labor, State Government Offices, December 7 1945, (NCC).

<sup>567</sup> R. Strahan, Prime Ministers Department to G. Adam Secretary, Berrigan Branch, ALP, June 30 1944, A.A., 1608, F20/1/1/ Part one.

<sup>568</sup> Alan Fitzgerald, *Italian Farming Soldiers: Prisoners of War in Australia, 1941-1947*, (Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1981), p.2.

probability would have told Santamaria about the POWs. Indeed, Modotti worked closely with the Italian POWs, and in writing to his Provincial in 1945 stated that the POWs placed him “in a most delicate situation.”<sup>569</sup> This delicate situation was the continual visits from escaped POWs wanting to remain and work in Australia. Father Barry Tobin recalls an example told to him by his father:

On one occasion my father was conducting a funeral at Melbourne General Cemetery at Carlton. The deceased was an Italian. Fr Modotti was officiating priest. My father knew Fr. Modotti extremely well and they were quite friendly... As they walked along they chatted quietly. Suddenly Fr Modotti told me father he was very worried about something... Fr Modotti said “the escaped Italian prisoner of war... Well, I have got it... I don’t know what to do.” My father replied: “Father for goodness sake get rid of him otherwise they’ll lock you up too!!!”<sup>570</sup>

Modotti also constantly received letters from Italian POWs wishing to settle in Australia after the war as the following letter indicates:

It is possible only through you to obtain some transmission of news to some higher person.... Now that the war in Europe is finished and we prisoners have, for the most part, the idea of establishing ourselves in Australia... You know well that although some of us had never done agricultural work, we quickly became used to it. Australia has produced an abundance of food since the prisoners have been working on the farms....<sup>571</sup>

Even B.A. Santamaria’s father Giuseppe Santamaria made appeals to Modotti on behalf of POWs.<sup>572</sup> These POWs loved the landscape and the Australian way of life. According to Josephine Cafagna, in an article entitled “Italy Mick”: “Rural Australia knew the Italians well. They were not ‘dagoes’ and ‘wogs’ the city folk referred to, they were friends who would eventually become fellow Australians.”<sup>573</sup>

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<sup>569</sup> Fr Ugo Modotti, letter to Provincial, December 31 1945, (JAMP).

<sup>570</sup> Barry Tobin, Letter to the Author, September 28, 2004. ACA

<sup>571</sup> Gaspare Renda to Rev. Padre Modotti, May 26 1945, A.A., A367/1, C62490.

<sup>572</sup> Giuseppe Santamaria, letter to Modotti, 28 March 1945, Santospirito Collection, IHS, Carlton.

<sup>573</sup> Josephine Cafagna, “Italy Mick,” *Saturday Extra, Weekend Australian*, August 17 2001, (newspaper clipping).

The reason to emphasize the Italian POWs is that when it came to looking for candidates for peoples for the post war immigration the POW experience demonstrated what potential there was for the Italian immigrant, particularly in agriculture. According to an article in *Labour History*, Andrew Markus argued that Italian POWs influenced ALP policy. Senior bureaucrats S.J. Butlin and C.B. Schedvin argued that the genesis of the immigration program was in the “importation of Italian prisoners of war.”<sup>574</sup>

In August 1945, the ALP changed its immigration policy. In the past it had been generally opposed to widespread migration because of its effects on the labour market. Now Arthur Calwell, in announcing Labor’s immigration policy, argued for an increase of 2 percent, by migration, to Australia’s population of 7 million.<sup>575</sup> Arthur Calwell writing in *Twentieth Century* stated: “Today Australia is being mocked by the empty cradle. It is a challenge which no Government has been able to ignore since the dawn of civilisation.”<sup>576</sup> The Australian Catholic Bishops whose statements at the time were being drafted by Santamaria also raised the stakes when it came to Australia’s population. In the document *Pattern for Peace*, they argued that Australia’s population was to be more than twenty million, which was at the time only 7 million.<sup>577</sup>

Another agreed reason for immigration was that the war had emphasised Australia’s vulnerability with such a low population and for defence reasons it had to increase its population. One Catholic commentator, Rev. C. Mayne argued, “Unless our population increases greatly the problem of the far-East – our Near North – will become a very

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<sup>574</sup> Markus, *op.cit.* p.25.

<sup>575</sup> *ibid.* p.21.

<sup>576</sup> A.A. Calwell. “Population- Australia’s Biggest Deficit.” *Twentieth Century*, Vol. 3, No.1, 1946, p.13.

<sup>577</sup> Episcopal Committee on Catholic Action, *Pattern for Peace*, (ANSCA: Melbourne, 1943), p.3.

difficult one. For even without war these people will seep in.”<sup>578</sup> Mayne’s sense of urgency at the threat of a yellow peril was shared with Calwell:

Our best rate of natural increase must receive a fillip if Australia is to gain the wealth, security and strength that will enable us to live a full life at peace, free from the fear of invasion which continually menaces us, while over-populated nations to our north cast their eyes around for extra breathing space. That extra population Australia must gain from Immigration.<sup>579</sup>

B.A. Santamaria, on the other hand was critical of Calwell’s approach to the problem. His point of departure was the issue of decentralism. Hence, Santamaria, did not have immigration at the heart of the population crisis but rather his focus was with having more Australian babies through decentralism. Population increase was to be achieved by promoting rural self-contained communities.<sup>580</sup> It was such criticisms towards Calwell that soured the poor relations between Calwell and Santamaria.

The tension between himself and Calwell is found in Santamaria’s autobiography: “Mr Calwell had great abilities and many virtues... . He was also a good hater, and I seemed to have precisely the personality which aroused that capacity,”<sup>581</sup> while former DLP Senator, Frank McManus, recalls: “Arthur Calwell had spoken to me about him on a few occasions; he had complained of one or two articles in the *Catholic Worker* that had criticised the ALP, and accused Santamaria of Fascist tendencies.”<sup>582</sup>

Was it the plight of Italian migrants which interested B.A. Santamaria in his land settlement schemes?<sup>583</sup> The Italian component was a break from the previous NCRM migration programme, which focussed more on Dutch and English farmers. In 1939, for

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<sup>578</sup> Rev. C. Mayne, *Exit Australia*, (Australian Secretariat of Catholic Action: Melbourne, 1945), p.13.

<sup>579</sup> Arthur A. Calwell, “Population- Australia’s Biggest Deficit, *Twentieth Century*, Vol.3. No.1. 1949, p.14

<sup>580</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “Will there be Any Australians To-morrow” *Twentieth Century*. Vol.1. No.1, September 1946, p.53.

<sup>581</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.178.

<sup>582</sup> Frank McManus, *The Tumult and the Shouting*, (Rigby: Melbourne, 1977) p.23.

<sup>583</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.128.



example, the NCRM had assisted Dutch migrants to the Western districts of Victoria.<sup>584</sup>

But also in 1939 Captain H.C. Smart, Director of Propaganda, Australia House, praised Mussolini's settlement of Italians in Libya arguing that "Mussolini could teach the British Empire a lesson in colonisation."<sup>585</sup>

In the Murrumbidgee Irrigation area in towns such as Griffith, Leeton and Yanco, the Italian migrants had settled successfully on the land, as most Italians "had been accustomed to garden agriculture with pick and spade..."<sup>586</sup> Therefore, with women and children engaging in a family business, these businesses "enabled the newcomers to take advantage of the depression years of the 1930s."<sup>587</sup> And as Rina Huber in *From Pasta to Pavlova: A Comparative Study of Italian Settlers in Sydney and Griffith* writes, "Australians sold out because the Italians were such willing buyers."<sup>588</sup>

At no point do we read Santamaria praising any Italian farmers or even acknowledging them. The Archbishop of Brisbane, James Duhig, on the other hand, praised the Italians in areas such as Griffith: "Griffith, New South Wales... Italians came in and purchased the declining farms and made them productive. Returned soldiers abandoned the Granite belt... and are very glad to sell out their farms and orchards to Italians who made a success of them."<sup>589</sup>

Yet there were the exceptions. And these exceptions occurred when Santamaria was the author but not acknowledged as the author such as Australian Bishop Statements and unsigned statements. In *Freedom*, now called *News Weekly*, he proposed Italy as a major

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<sup>584</sup> *Rural Life*, July 8 1939, p.6.

<sup>585</sup> *Rural Life*, July 8 1939. p.1.

<sup>586</sup> Rina Huber, *A Comparative Study of Italian Settlers in Sydney and Griffith*, (University of Queensland Press: St. Lucia, 1977), p.16.

<sup>587</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>588</sup> *ibid.*

source of immigrants. This was supported by a belief that Italians had a higher birth-rate when placed on rural properties as argued in the Social Justice Statement in 1945:

Of all the races of migrants who had come to Australia in the period between the wars, the birth-rate of each one, except the Italians, had declined to the Australian level soon after their arrival. The Italian birth-rate had remained high because Italian migrants had mainly gone to country districts.<sup>590</sup>

In *News Weekly*, articles repeatedly referred to the fate of Italy. If Italy fell to the Communists then Europe would fall.<sup>591</sup> The solution to the Communist problem was to help Italy by accepting migrants and according to *News Weekly* this was achievable with an “open-hearted immigration policy in nations like Australia.”<sup>592</sup>

But the question remains: what were the intentions of B.A. Santamaria? Was it to aid Italian migrants or was it to build a base of potential Movement recruits from a decentralised migrant Italian population? Perhaps there may have been a more apocalyptic reason as is indicated in a letter from B.A. Santamaria to Mr G. Rudduck: “All the available evidence points to the fact that unless we greatly expand our agricultural production of all types, we will not only lose what might be a very lucrative export market but we will be unable to feed our own people.”<sup>593</sup>

During the war, Santamaria had seen the *Opera* as the place to recruit Italian migrants into the Movement, now it was land settlement. To Santamaria, Italians were the natural constituents for the Movement. The land settlement scheme was not a new post Second World War concept. Land Settlement schemes were a concept adapted as early as Australia’s colonial days where large tracts of land needed to be occupied by immigrants.

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<sup>589</sup> *The Advocate*, April 4 1945, p.15.

<sup>590</sup> National Secretariat of Catholic Action, *The Land is Your Business*, (ANSCA: Melbourne, 1945), p.5.

<sup>591</sup> *News Weekly*, August 19 1953, p.10.

<sup>592</sup> *News Weekly*, October 21 1953, p.9.

<sup>593</sup> B.A. Santamaria to Mr G.Rudduck, July 30 1951, (NCRM).

As early as the 1820s land grants were used in Tasmania and New South Wales in order to kick start the rural economy.<sup>594</sup>

In the 1860s Catholic parliamentarian, Gavan Duffy attempted land reforms. Duffy was a visionary and part of his land settlement ideas was to fend off the squatters who had occupied large sections of Crown land. But Gavan Duffy was of the first to see what had worked in France, Spain and in Italy on the farms could work in Australia as he wrote: “skilled European workers should be imported to teach Victorians how to produce olive oils, tobacco, dried fruits...”<sup>595</sup>

After the First World War the Australian Government offered land to ex- soldiers who had fought bravely for the allies in the First World War. These soldier settlements were “framed around the concept of the yeoman and the model of family production...”<sup>596</sup>

After the First World War the soldier settlement had settled nearly 40,000 soldiers on the land by the Australian government, but over 60% eventually abandoned the concept by the time the Second World War came around.<sup>597</sup> However, as argued by Stuart Macintyre “the very word development was synonymous with land settlements and its associated public works.”<sup>598</sup>

What was so unique about the NCRM concept of land settlement was the type of migrant, i.e. Italians and Catholic; and that it was to be managed by a private body such as the NCRM instead of being managed by Government as was the case in the past. The notion of land settlement, where migrants would be settled in rural areas, was an idea pushed by the National Catholic Rural Movement and in particular by B.A. Santamaria.

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<sup>594</sup> N.G. Butlin, *Forming a Colonial Economy: Australia*, (Cambridge University Press, Melbourne: 1994) p.184.

<sup>595</sup> C. Pearl, *The Three Lives of Gavan Duffy*, (UNSW, St.Leonards: 1979) p.202.

<sup>596</sup> Marilyn Lake, *The Limit of Hope: Soldier Settlement in Victoria*, (Oxford University Press: Melbourne, 1987) p.xvi.

As early as 1942 Rev. J.H. Larkins reported on Italian settlements in Libya “where our soldiers were fighting not long ago...”<sup>599</sup> Meanwhile the deliberations of the National Council of the NCRM in 1946 looked at the broad question of land settlement and whether it should be made up of migrants, returned soldiers or a mixture of both.<sup>600</sup> The settlement comprised homes built close together that “radiated out from the village settlement.”<sup>601</sup> B.A. Santamaria also promoted the Libyan model when writing to Hon. Harold Holt in 1952.<sup>602</sup> In Queensland, its Premier Vincent Gair saw the possibility of landing more Italian and Dutch in North Queensland and made an announcement to that effect in London in June 1953.<sup>603</sup>

Writing to J.B. Lanetot of the International Catholic Migration Committee in February 1953, Santamaria stated that the programme would be according to “typical European pattern of agriculture” seen in “Holland, Rhineland areas of Germany, and parts of Italy.”<sup>604</sup> Santamaria also continued to Lanetot that he had secured “the co-operation of the Italian Government, through its foreign credit institute, I.C.L.E.”<sup>605</sup> The Italian Government was certainly committed to the project and through ICLE a subsidy of 1500 pounds for each family was to be provided to the Italian settlers.<sup>606</sup>

In August 1953, Santamaria signed an agreement with an August Vogel of Zeehan in Tasmania who transferred 700 acres of land to the Catholic diocese of Hobart and the National Catholic Rural Movement to be used for a pilot project of settlement of Italian

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<sup>597</sup> *ibid.* p.xviii.

<sup>598</sup> S. Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, (CUP, Oakleigh: 1990) p.168.

<sup>599</sup> Rev. J.H. Larkins, “The Growing Tree: Report of the Rural Conference”, Wagga Wagga, July 7 1943, p.18.

<sup>600</sup> *Rural Life*, July 1946, p.2.

<sup>601</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>602</sup> B.A. Santamaria to Hon. Harold Holt, November 20 1952, (NCRM).

<sup>603</sup> *News Weekly*, July 22 1953, p.4.

<sup>604</sup> B.A. Santamaria to Mr. Lanetot. February 17 1953, cited in full in Morgan, *op.cit.* pp.81-82

<sup>605</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>606</sup> “Memorandum on Tasmanian Migrant Settlement”, undated – 1953, (NCRM).

migrants. The transfer did have a clause that if nothing were achieved after twelve months, the land would revert to the vendor.<sup>607</sup>

During the first meeting of the interested parties in November 1952, which included Tasmanian Premier Robert Cosgrove, it was argued that no major obstacle existed and a pilot could commence. The area in question was on the North East coast of Tasmania, a place on Granville Harbour.<sup>608</sup>

In 1953 at the National Catholic Rural Movement conference a member of the Italian legation, Dr. G. Maselli, was an invited guest and at the conference<sup>609</sup> he gave a paper on “agriculture in Italy and Projects for Settlement Abroad.” The reason for his attendance was the on-going negotiations between B.A. Santamaria and the Italian Government on settling Italian migrants throughout rural Victoria. Writing to John Farrell in 1953 Santamaria outlined his colonisation plans: “The National Catholic Rural Movement is working hard to secure the basic legislation, the financial backing, and the suitable land in various States to undertake large-scale schemes of colonisation and agricultural settlement...”.<sup>610</sup> He continued in his letter: “When these settlements come to fruition – as, please God, they will – it is our intention to incorporate into them native born Australians and migrants...”.<sup>611</sup> For the plan to work, argued B.A. Santamaria, each settler needed some capital and “through the machinery of the New South Wales Co-operation Act, this would be sufficient to enable such a project to begin in the State of

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<sup>607</sup> “Agreement: August Vogel and Bartholomew Augustine Santamaria”, August 15 1952, (NCRM).

<sup>608</sup> “The Colonization Programme: Summary of Conclusions of first meeting of interested parties”, November 9 1953, (NCRM).

<sup>609</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “The NCRM task for 1953”, *Migration to Australia*, (NCRM: Albury, 1953), p.10.

<sup>610</sup> B.A. Santamaria to John Farrell, May 18 1953, (NCRM).

<sup>611</sup> *ibid.*

NSW. We have secured that a similar Act will be passed in Victoria in the forthcoming session of the Victorian parliament.”<sup>612</sup>

One speaker at the conference praised Italian migrants as first class; “when I am away...” the speaker argued “my farm is run almost exclusively by Italians. I ask for no better, no harder working, no more faithful labour than I have at the present time.”<sup>613</sup>

At the conclusion of his paper, Maselli stated: “Italy is ready to co-operate with the contribution of its experience and its work with any country which has a complementary interest in this field...”<sup>614</sup> To B.A. Santamaria Australia was one such country and a detailed Memorandum was in place. In letters to Grenfell Ruddock, Director of Ministry of Regional Development, B.A. Santamaria outlined his proposal. “That the National Catholic Rural Movement through a co-operative Regional Development Society... acquire, develop and settle a large area.... The pattern of settlement should be basically agricultural, and the settlers be largely migrants....”<sup>615</sup> Dr Maselli was keen to help with the settlement of Italian migrants to Australia and would ring B.A. Santamaria constantly in the morning at 8am, much to the annoyance of his wife.<sup>616</sup>

Reflecting on the period in an interview with Pascoe, B.A. Santamaria recalls the events:

It was a very flourishing organization [NCRM] right through Australia and then at the end of the year when Calwell was talking about the migration programme and I could see that they would get British, but they would also have to go for Italians, I thought well why can't we do something to apply these principles in a concrete way – that's how it arose. It didn't arise through any Italian link.<sup>617</sup>

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<sup>612</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>613</sup> G.W.Brown, “Government Plans for Migration in 1953”, *Migration to Australia* (NCRM: Albury, 1953), p.27.

<sup>614</sup> G. Maselli, “Agriculture in Italy and Projects for Settlement Abroad”, *ibid.* p.34.

<sup>615</sup> B.A. Santamaria to Grenfell Ruddock, ACT, May 11 1952, (NCRM).

<sup>616</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Interview with Robert Pascoe, *op.cit.*

<sup>617</sup> *ibid.*

When B.A. Santamaria introduced ideas of land settlement he found the Victorian premier John Cain and Tasmanian premier Cosgrove were interested. Ironically, it was his friend Colin Clark who advised Queensland Premier Vince Gair that the idea was “haywire”.<sup>618</sup>

Santamaria was always very careful never to mention the fact that the project was mainly for Italian migrants. If he mentioned Italians he would always mention them alongside Dutch, German and Australian farmers. Italians were always mentioned last.<sup>619</sup> Yet, when Bishop Henschke wrote to Santamaria it was clear to him that Italians were first: “I am quite sure that if a number of Italian, Dutch or German farmers were given a bit of virgin land and no help whatsoever they would still make a do of it and be prosperous in a few years.”<sup>620</sup>

B.A. Santamaria was able to introduce the idea in the Victorian parliament, as he recalls in an interview with Robert Pascoe in 1986:

The only time Cain introduced me to Holt, who was his Minister for Lands, and Cain had given an instruction that some land – third class I remember that so clearly – should be made available; and I was introduced to Holt and Holt said yes we would talk about that. He was going to talk to Frank Scully who was an assistant Minister, and I can still remember going through the door and Holt saying to me: “We were at the University together, its a pity we never met, but I hope we will meet a lot more in future”, holding his hand out and my shaking hands with him.<sup>621</sup>

Mr B. Holt and Mr Galvin introduced the Land Settlement Bill into the Victorian parliament on November 11<sup>th</sup> 1953. Known as the Land Settlement Act 1953, its purpose was to be a pilot scheme<sup>622</sup> to make available an allocation of allotments in order

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<sup>618</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>619</sup> B.A. Santamaria to Grenfell Rudduck, May 11 1952, (NCRM).

<sup>620</sup> Bishop Henschke to B.A. Santamaria. December 27 1952, (NCRM).

<sup>621</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Interview with Rob Pascoe, *op.cit.*

<sup>622</sup> Frank Scully, Letter to the Author, June 28 2004, (ACA).

for agencies to use for the settlement of migrants. The Act was not an open-ended contract for the NCRM to implement whatever it needed to achieve its ends. The bill in fact was "...with the consent of the Governor in Council...".<sup>623</sup>

The Bill went to the house without the crucial clause that would have allowed the Crown to make the land available and then was returned and reintroduced with the missing clause. When the Bill was introduced a second time and with the missing clause, all hell broke loose. Tom Prior in his biography of the Victorian opposition leader at the time Henry Bolte writes of the mayhem: "When poor Holt, the man in the middle, stood up to introduce the Bill, I was sitting opposite him, as the Leader of the Opposition, and it was obvious to me that he was upset, reluctant to do the 'dirty work' ordered by the Party. Blind Freddy could see Holt was unhappy: I jeered, 'You're stumbling. You don't like it, do you?' Holt couldn't take it. He said, 'Of course I don't', threw his copy of the Bill on the floor, and stamped out of the Chamber."<sup>624</sup> John Cain Snr eventually introduced the bill.

The Bill had been debated all night long and Frank Scully recalls that when the politicians were leaving the chamber, Liberal J. Bloomfield, turned to him and said, "What a victory for the Vatican."<sup>625</sup>

The following week *News Weekly* ran the headline on its front page "Way is Open for Migrant Settlement," stating in the article that: "sensational political fireworks surrounded an amendment to the Land Settlement Act in the Victorian parliament last week. After Lands Minister Holt tore up the amendment..."<sup>626</sup> The *News Weekly* article

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<sup>623</sup> Legislative Assembly, "A Bill entitled An Act relating to Land Settlement, and for other purposes, Vol.37. No.5. Victorian Parliament, Melbourne 1953, p.4.

<sup>624</sup> Tom Prior, *Bolte by Bolte*, (Craftsman Pub. Proprietary: Melbourne, 1990), p.44.



also noted that the Bill “caused a violent outburst of xenophobia and sectarian bitterness.”<sup>627</sup>

The Land Settlement Bill was never to see the light of day, which according to Santamaria, was always doomed to failure as the land was “third class land” and “you couldn’t raise a rabbit on it.”<sup>628</sup> The question, therefore: if the land was unsuitable, why try to settle migrants there? A cynical answer could well be that it wasn’t about Italian migrants and their prosperity, but rather Italian migrants and their contribution to the Movement.

Before the eventful Labor Party split in March 1954, *News Weekly* continued to stress the importance of the Land Settlement painting the worst case scenario if such ideas were not acted upon. An example of this was when the United States of America tested the H Bomb at Bikini Atoll, an uninhabited 6.0-square-kilometer atoll in one of the Micronesian Islands in the Pacific Ocean, *News Weekly* wrote that the test showed the urgency of dispersing the population as well as industry in order to minimize the effects of atom bombing.<sup>629</sup>

The divisions in the Australian Labor Party were to ultimately kill any attempts of Land Settlement schemes and even before such event, the Italian Government had already began to distance itself from the NCRM. This was due to the frequent lobbying by Arthur Calwell and other ALP politicians who argued against the NCRM’s involvement,<sup>630</sup> this with the change of Italian Government diplomats, from Dr Silvio

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<sup>625</sup> Frank Scully, Letter to the Author, June 28 2004, (ACA).

<sup>626</sup> *News Weekly*, December 16 1953, p.1.

<sup>627</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>628</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Interview with Robert Pascoe, *op.cit.*

<sup>629</sup> *News Weekly*, March 31 1945, p.1.

<sup>630</sup> B.A. Santamaria to Fr B McLaughlin, May 17 1954, reproduced in full in Morgan, *op.cit.* pp.97-98.

Daneo “a devout Catholic” to “Dr. Maselli-an anti-Catholic” who according to Santamaria was making a mess of the plans. Santamaria wrote about the unfolding events of the Land Settlement schemes:

I am anxious that the Italian Bank will get into touch with the Queensland Government direct. I feel that Vince Gair may be inclined to act with them. However, if he does, and supports settlement on a Government-to-Government basis, it will prove to the Italians that Arthur and Nick were right and that in future they should deal with people of their type, rather than with us. If you could do anything to get Vince to answer any such approaches by a clear and unequivocal statement that the organisation of settlement should be done by a private body, and if an unofficial hint could be given to any Italian approaches that their dealings should be made through us, it would back up our position for all future negotiations, and deliver a telling blow to Arthur and to Nick.<sup>631</sup>

The land Settlement scheme’s failure demonstrated that there was present in the Labor Party (and also in the other political parties) traces of paranoia, sectarianism and xenophobia. These traces became more manifested in the days which followed in the Labor Party split of 1954.

There is also another important observation about the Land Settlement ideas of Santamaria. Despite Santamaria’s constant reassurance that land settlement would include Dutch, German and lastly Italian migrants, the documentation however only shows Italian migrants. It seems that in fact the schemes were for Italian migrants only.<sup>632</sup>

B.A. Santamaria never again attempted to establish the Land Settlement Schemes. He never initiated the idea even when Italians were a little more popular like the late 70s and 80s. In the 1960s when quizzed about the schemes he avoided mentioning Italians at all.

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<sup>631</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>632</sup> “Memorandum: Project for Settlement in Tasmania”, 1953, (NCRM). See also, Ministero degli Affari Esteri. “Legazione D’Italia in Australia.” July 8 1953, (NCRM).

When asked about the type of migrants that he was going to bring to Australia, Santamaria answered: “The potential countries of emigration have been Great Britain, Western Germany, Holland and the southern states of Europe.”<sup>633</sup> Santamaria never suggested the scheme as an alternative for the Vietnamese migrants that were later to arrive. The idea just fell off the agenda and was never to be spoken of again. There could be several explanations for this. One explanation is that the Movement grew its support from the rural areas, particularly after the fall of Communism in the 1980s. The farmers disgruntled with the lack of Government intervention and with the threat of cheap imports flooding the Australian market, found Santamaria a willing ally. And Santamaria true to his desire to grow the Movement at all costs, simply adopted them as his own constituents and MPs who opposed such pro-immigration and pro-multiculturalism became the friends of the Movement. Even Pauline Hanson was inspired by Santamaria and she included some of his material in her maiden speech.<sup>634</sup> Therefore, Santamaria no longer had the need to import his support into rural areas. It came to him from those same rural areas who once, and perhaps still, opposed migrants.

This leads to another theory. The Liberal and National Party have held many of the rural electorates in the past. Therefore, there was a similar tone in the ALP proposal for its 2004 immigration policy where it proposed to settle migrants in rural areas: “in order to ease pressure on Australia’s densely populated cities and towns.... The Labor party went on to Commission Glen Withers and Marion Russell of the Chifley Research Centre to do a study.”<sup>635</sup> These new migrants who would be supported by the ALP would more likely vote for the ALP, therefore placing potential ALP voters into marginal rural seats once held by the Country Party or more recently the National Party.

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<sup>633</sup> B.A. Santamaria, *Spotlight on Santamaria*, (The Hawthorn Press: Melbourne, 1960) pp.19-20.

<sup>634</sup> John Pasquarelli, *The Pauline Hanson Story... by the man who knows*, (New Holland: French Forest, 1998), p.113.

<sup>635</sup> Bob Birrell, “Redistributing Migrants: The Labor Agenda”, *People and Place*, Vol. 2, No.4., 2003, p.15.

With B.A. Santamaria's lack of interest in the schemes in later days, it seems there was really a rationale to his plans. The rationale was to settle Italian migrants in densely populated areas that would be a natural constituent for the Movement and, just like the Country Women's League was a natural base from which the Liberal Party emerged, the Italian migrants would be a base for Santamaria and his new political empire. Robin Hughes, in her interview with B.A. Santamaria came to the same conclusion and put that question to B.A. Santamaria. Santamaria replied by stating that this was not true, but didn't offer any explanation on why it wasn't true.<sup>636</sup>

## THE SPLIT

With the Land Settlement scheme, and the events surrounding its introduction into the Victorian parliament, the harvest – to use an NCRM analogy – was ripe with Catholic and Italian conspiracies. The Labor Member for Richmond, Frank Scully (who not only was a grouper but also a member of the Movement) still held the view in 2001 that the Labor Party split was a plot to rid Catholics from the Australian Labor Party: "I met him [Jack Schmella – Federal Secretary of the ALP] on the steps of Parliament House in Melbourne and asked him, 'What are you doing here?' He told me: 'We are going to cut back the Catholic influence in the Party...'"<sup>637</sup>

But the split had an Italian component: it was Santamaria. Using Catholic prejudice was one tactic in opposing the Movement and the groupers, but with some Catholics in the ALP supporting Evatt, opposing Santamaria with its Mediterranean overtones was the extra factor came into it. Santamaria was seen as someone from an Italian background

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<sup>636</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Interview with Robin Hughes, op.cit.

and foreign to the Australian Labor Party. Santamaria himself argued that “one of the things that happened at the time of the split was that Evatt found it useful to use my name, because it was Italian and Catholic.”<sup>638</sup>

With the Labor Party split of 1954-1955 Santamaria was now focussed more than ever on the fight against Communism. Lena Santospirito kept Father Modotti up to date on the happenings of the split. Although neutral on the issue she asked for prayers for both Calwell and Santamaria who were on different sides.<sup>639</sup> Calwell, on the other hand, complained that during his re-election campaign the anti-Communist Labor Party was publishing “vicious and lying leaflets” in Italian, claiming that the letter was published on the letterhead of the Italian Civic Committee.<sup>640</sup> As we will show in chapter six the background of Santamaria as a Catholic, but moreover as of an Italian background, became a trump card in the anti-Movement campaign of the ALP and of the unions opposed to Santamaria.

The split occurred when Evatt, following his defeat in the Federal elections of 1954, read out a press release on October 5, 1954, where he denounced “a small minority group of members, particularly in the State of Victoria, which has ... become increasingly disloyal to the Labour Movement and the Labor leadership.” This group, added Evatt, had *News Weekly* that acts as its organ.<sup>641</sup>

Santamaria himself writing about the split recalls “... three discussions which I had with Dr Evatt, each one of them at his request, comprise a most extraordinary episode within a twelve month period. Since the basis on which the discussions were held was that they

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<sup>637</sup> Frank Scully, “The Story of the Labor Split”, *News Weekly*, April 6 2002, p.20

<sup>638</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview with Robin Hughes, op.cit.

<sup>639</sup> Lena Santospirito to Hugh Modotti, July 5 1960, Santospirito Papers, Italian Historical Society, Carlton.

were confidential, I treated them as such until 5 October 1954, when he stated that he had only recently discovered a ‘plot’ with which I was connected to ‘take over’ the Labor Party.”<sup>642</sup>

With the press statement delivered by Evatt, the ALP now divided itself between those who supported the groupers and the Movement and those who didn’t. What is of interest to us in this thesis is that in Murray’s view the name Santamaria “was bandied freely about with the innuendo, if not outright accusation, of clerical fascism and a deeply sinister Southern European Catholic Plot.”<sup>643</sup>

Mary Helen Woods, daughter of Santamaria, recalled that during this time that the world of “politics was generally kept away from us, though some of us remember the difficult days of the split. And Dad always tried to preserve us from the cynicism which such events engendered.”<sup>644</sup> Another of Santamaria’s daughters, Anne McElroy, recalled this period stating: “I used to think at school people reacted strangely because we were Italian... then I realised it was because of the name Santamaria.”<sup>645</sup>

After the split, Movement supporters like Stan Keon, who went on to form the Democratic Labor Party, were defeated by Labor people such as Jim Cairns. Cairns had encountered the Italian community in the 1940s when as a member of the Commonwealth Investigation Bureau he had gone to Werribee to arrest the market gardeners. James Gobbo recalls the story:

He told me that as a member of the special branch when war broke out he was sent down to Werribee with a number of trucks with

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<sup>640</sup> *News Weekly*, December 14 1955, p.4.

<sup>641</sup> Robert Murray, *The Split: Australian Labor in the Fifties*, (Cheshire: Melbourne, 1970), p.180.

<sup>642</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.141.

<sup>643</sup> Murray, *op.cit.* p.251.

<sup>644</sup> Mary Helen Woods, “All in the Family”, *The Weekend Australian*, February 18 1998, p.17.

<sup>645</sup> John Lyons, “Against the Tide”, *Good Weekend Magazine*, March 1990, p.52.

instructions to round up all the Italian Market gardeners, which he did, then and there, as they were in the fields in their gumboots.<sup>646</sup>

After winning the seat of Richmond from Stan Keon (with violence and intimidation used by the ALP through recruited Communist thugs)<sup>647</sup> Cairns dedicated himself to the needs of the community, which included many Italians as is illustrated in the following story recalled by Paul Ormonde:

When a young Italian couple with a sick baby found that a parking control post erected in a lane behind their house prevented them getting their car out of their garage they asked their new local member to use his influence to get the post removed. Cairns took up the case with the council, and the post went. The incident was the start of a long friendship between Cairns and the Italian couple: Salvatore and Lena Palazzolo. Word quickly spread through the Italian community that the Palazzolos had a friend who could get things done. He helped many families with their legal and financial problems, and often smoothed out the processes of getting their relatives to Australia from Italy. His persistent interventions irritated Immigration Department officials.<sup>648</sup>

Cairns became one of the politicians most disliked by the Movement. Yet, the evidence shows that Cairns, unlike the Movement, worked with and supported Italian migrants. In fact, similar stories of helping migrants in need are not found in any Movement writings. This is despite most Italian migrants supporting the Democratic Labor Party because they simply interpreted the ALP as a Communist party.<sup>649</sup>

Another Australian Labor Party politician who dedicated himself to the Italian migrants was Arthur Calwell. As early as the 1940s with the internment, Calwell dedicated himself to the care of the Italian community. The Romanin family, who were close to Fr Modotti while he was in Australia, went out during the days of the split and handed out how to

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<sup>646</sup> James Gobbo. "Italians in Victoria and the Second World War. An Address given for the Italian Historical Society given at the Italian Institute of Culture, May 19 1988", p.6.

<sup>647</sup> Paul Ormonde, *A Foolish Passionate Man*, (Penguin: Ringwood, 1981) p.50.

<sup>648</sup> *ibid.* Pp.54-55.

<sup>649</sup> *ibid.* p.50,

vote cards for Calwell.<sup>650</sup> Archbishop Mannix himself acknowledged Calwell's effort with the Italian community as early as 1943:

I am glad to have this opportunity of convening to you my very sincere appreciation of the invaluable assistance given to me, to Father Modotti and to all concerned with the many Italian problems that have arisen since the war began, by your colleague, the Member for Melbourne, Mr A.A. Calwell. Whenever I have sought his help, and I have done so often, he has, at considerable inconvenience to himself, taken up with the authorities all cases of distress and hardships, which I have referred to him. Without his generous co-operation Italian problems in Melbourne, I believe, would have been considerably worse.<sup>651</sup>

For the 1958 state election, Frank Scully appealed in a letter written in Italian to all the Italians in the seat of Richmond.<sup>652</sup> Some members of the Italian community also stood for the Democratic Labor Party. One such example was Nino Randazzo, future editor of *Il Globo*. In 1964 he stood for the DLP in the seat of Fitzroy against Dinny Lovegrove of the ALP and H. Price of the Liberal Country Party.<sup>653</sup>

The split doesn't have an Italian-Australian history. According to some sources, the Italian community like most Catholics would have supported the DLP, merely out of an anti-communist fear. But, generally and in time, Italian migrants returned to the ALP, like Nino Randazzo, who reluctantly admitted to the fact that he had once stood for the DLP.

While the ALP was engaged in the inner fighting of the split, Italian migration to Australia continued at a steady pace. Italian migrants had increased from 33,632 in 1947

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<sup>650</sup> Ruggiero Romanin, Interview with the Author, July 15, 1997, cited in A. S. Cappello, "Aspects of Italian Catholic Life in Melbourne with special references to the political convictions of its Chaplain's, 1919 to 1945", Yarra Theological Union, 1995, Melbourne.

<sup>651</sup> Archbishop Daniel Mannix, Letter to the Prime Minister, John Curtin, September 13 1943. A.A., A1608, AA19/1/1.

<sup>652</sup> Frank Scully, Letter to the Italian community, May 28 1958. (ACA).



to 119, 897 in 1954 and in 1961 the number almost doubled to 228,296.<sup>654</sup> Therefore, during the time of the Labor Party split and its aftermath 1950-1961 nearly 200,000 Italians settled in Australia.

After the departure of Fr Modotti, Santamaria saw what could be done in recruiting members of the Italian community to the Movement. He did this not only with his Land Settlement schemes but also in starting several organizations, as the Italian migrants were excellent candidates for the Movement. They were Catholic, working-class; they were loyal and could be easily guided. But moreover, they were not yet aligned with any political organization. What was unfortunate about the efforts of B.A. Santamaria was that the Italian migrants were a “means to an end”. The ends were the ends of the Movement. This meant starting organizations for the Italian community that would channel them into the Movement. Yet, none of these organizations actually met the migrants.

As early as 1939, *L'Angelo della Famiglia* was made a part of the Secretariat of Catholic Action. B.A. Santamaria at the time was the assistant director, but when war broke out and the Italian migrants were in their greatest time of need, B.A. Santamaria was missing in action - although he did assist Modotti in opposing the anti-fascists. In 1945, Santamaria supported the *Opera* and in 1953 he attempted to settle the migrants in rural areas. In all these ventures, the aim was the same: to recruit Italians into the Movement.

During this period the Italian migrants needed simple resources to help them settle in the wider Australian community, even simple resources like jobs, and help with getting

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<sup>653</sup> *The Age*, June 29 1964, p.6.

<sup>654</sup> Des Storer, “Italian in Australia: A Social Overview. Paper Presented to the World Conference on Italian Immigration”, Rome 1975, p.3.

jobs. Also needed were language classes, an idea Modotti had organised before the war. These were needs that Catholic Action, or even the Movement could have provided. But no, to Santamaria the Italian migrant's role was to join him in the crusade against the war on Communism and the Italian migrants were there to make up the numbers and at no point were any provisions made for their real welfare.

In 1952, B.A. Santamaria wrote to his friend Marco Milani-Comparetti of Catholic Action in Italy about the Italian situation. He argued that the Italian problem was serious with 15000 to 20000 Italians in Victoria being affected by an increasing amount of unemployment. He then outlined a programme to Milani-Comparetti:

... On the religious side, the Church is finding a very great difficulty in absorbing the elements newly arrived in its midst. The Capuchin Fathers, who number more than twenty, are very active in Australia, but by and large their work is in providing missions. On the other hand, the Australian parishes which are served by a most devoted clergy do find it difficult to overcome the barrier of a different language and a different culture.

Although this is a matter of delicacy which I mention to you privately only, the obvious solution – the organisation of national parishes – would not seem to me to meet the situation in Australia. We are finding a frightening amount of anti-clericalism among Italians. This is manifested, strangely enough, more against Priests of their own nationality than against Australian Priests.

After discussion with the Archbishop of Melbourne, who is Chairman of the Episcopal Committee on Catholic Action, it has been decided to begin a special branch of Catholic Action for Italians. Although part of the structure of Australian Catholic Action, it will have its own special techniques, and will serve first of all as a bridge between the Italian Catholic masses and the Australian parishes, while on the other hand it will provide a basic organization, which will facilitate the work of the Capuchin Fathers.<sup>655</sup>

Santamaria then went on to ask for literature that he could use in the recruitment of Italian migrants. He also informed Milani-Comparetti that he had recruited an organiser,

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<sup>655</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Letter to Marco Milani-Comparetti, November 3 1952, reproduced in Morgan, *op.cit.* pp.68-69.

Dr N. Piergiovanni as well as Fr Nazario Mammi with the work.<sup>656</sup> Yet, in the letter there is no mention of helping migrants with jobs, providing help with language skills or even combating negative attitudes towards them. Rather, it was only ensuring that Catholicism and “Catholic Action” mattered.

In 1953, however, the Movement wasn’t at all sympathetic to the Italian demonstrations in Brisbane, where the unemployed migrants “mobbed” the office of the Italian vice consul demanding work or repatriation to Europe. *News Weekly* argued that “Just how this act of violence and hooliganism was designed to assist the re-employment of the Italians was most difficult to understand.”<sup>657</sup>

*News Weekly* during this period maintained an interest in Italian affairs. Val Adami, for example, wrote the “Weekly Foreign Affairs”, which he did until his death in 1955, aged only 47 years of age. Val Adami Jnr recalls his father writing “overly” on Italian and Yugoslav news and that from time to time his father commented that “a paragraph had been omitted – usually one attacking Tito or Deganelle, or praising Adenauer or de Gasperi or Franco.”<sup>658</sup>

Still focused on the Italian migrants, Santamaria looked to the Capuchin fathers who had taken over from where Modotti had left off. He approached Fr Nazario Mammi to initiate Italian Catholic Action in order to recruit them into the Movement.<sup>659</sup> But Santamaria discovered that the Italian migrants were not interested in the Movement. They were economic migrants, not political refugees and despite Santamaria giving the Capuchins an office, the Italian migrants turned it into a quasi welfare centre rather than

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<sup>656</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>657</sup> *News Weekly*, January 14 1953, p.2.

<sup>658</sup> Val Adami, Letter to the author, June 2 1996, (ACA).

a recruitment centre for the Movement. According to Ivano Ercole's account the Capuchin initiative had no other goal apart from the channeling of the efforts of the priests to willingly assist the migrants who were landing by the hundreds at Melbourne's ports...".<sup>660</sup> With this setback, Santamaria turned to the Scalabrianian fathers – and Santamaria credits himself as being the person who brought them out to Australia. But once again his efforts were frustrated by both the migrants and the Scalabrianian fathers who didn't respond to the Movement's objectives.<sup>661</sup>

In 1954, Santamaria employed Guerrino Perisnotto as a union representative for the Movement.<sup>662</sup> The aim with Perisnotto was to safeguard the Italian migrants from the Communist threat. They formed an organization called the Italo-Australian Catholic Workers Association, ACLIA.<sup>663</sup> According to Ivano Ercole this organization was not only political, i.e. to recruit Italian migrants for the Movement, but it was also “motivated by a genuine wish to free Italian workers from the conditions of social inferiority in which they found themselves and to organise them into an active Catholic force within the Australian unions...”<sup>664</sup> B.A. Santamaria, also adds that the ACLIA was modelled on the “para-union movement” of the Christian Democratic Movement.<sup>665</sup> But for it to work it needed the support of the Italian priests and in 1954 there was no Fr Modotti. Both the Capuchins and Fr Aldo Lorigiola of the Scalabrianians opposed the concept. This organization was practically unknown to any other members of the Movement's Executive. It was, however, Fr Lorigiola who dismantled ACLIA while

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<sup>659</sup> Cahill, *op.cit.* p.140.

<sup>660</sup> Ivano Ercole, *A Living History the First 25 years of the Italian Catholic Federation in Australia*, (Italian Catholic Federation: Melbourne, 1985), p.12.

<sup>661</sup> Fr John Raccanello, Letter to the author, July 26 2004. (ACA).

<sup>662</sup> Ercole, *op.cit.* p.32.

<sup>663</sup> *ibid.* p.33.

<sup>664</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>665</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Interview by Rob Pascoe, *op.cit.*

Perisnotto was away ill. According to Ercole, “on his return to Melbourne he regrettably discovered that ACLIA had stopped existing.”<sup>666</sup>

Santamaria had exhausted all avenues in trying to recruit Italian migrants into the Movement, even using the Apostolic Delegate in one attempt. Unlike Panico, the new Apostolic Delegate, Romolo Carboni, was a staunch supporter of Santamaria and the Movement. He arrived in Australia in 1953 and as a fluent speaker in English, Carboni urged Italian migrants to join the Movement arguing: “It is necessary that they actively participate in trade union organizations not only to defend and guarantee their rights, but also to ensure that the trade unions preserve their genuine democratic nature and their function as an instrument of the economic and social progress of the country and not of its ruin.”<sup>667</sup> Santamaria did not give up easily on the Italian migrants and among the Scalabrianian Fathers there was unrest because Santamaria was still trying to get the Italian migrants involved in the Movement.<sup>668</sup>

In the 1960s, Santamaria had given up on the Italian migrants. He had failed to recruit them into the Movement as argued by Des Cahill: “...he was unable to inspire his Italian compatriots to participate in this struggle even though it was already obvious that Italian men and women were working in exploitative working conditions.”<sup>669</sup> During the 1963 election B.A. Santamaria made reference to the Italian Australian journal *La Fiamma* which according to B.A. Santamaria was supporting Mr Calwell.<sup>670</sup>

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<sup>666</sup> Ercole, *op.cit.* p.42n.

<sup>667</sup> R. Carboni, “The Migrant in Australia: An Address to New Australians”, *Social Survey* (7) 3, p.167.

<sup>668</sup> Fr John Raccanello, Letter to the author, July 26 2004, (ACA).

<sup>669</sup> Des Cahill, “Paradoxes and Predictions: Italians and Catholicism in Multicultural Australia”, *In Search of the Italian-Australian into the new Millennium*, (Italian-Australian Institute: Melbourne, 2000), p.513.

<sup>670</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “The DLP and the Federal Election”, *Facts*, October-December 1963, p.6.

Santamaria remained full of contradictions when it came to Italian migrants. He certainly knew many Italian migrants, particularly priests, and he certainly knew many other individual migrants. Colin Jory, for example, noted that he first met Santamaria via an introduction in Albury from Father Jigger Bongiorno, who like Bob was also of an Aeolian background.<sup>671</sup> Brendan Rodway, who worked many years closely with B.A. Santamaria tells an interesting story which highlights the inconsistency of B.A. Santamaria. Santamaria was always having his car repaired and would go to a car yard in Collingwood. The owner's family were Italian immigrants, whom Santamaria had assisted when they first came to Australia. The story is told by Rodway that at the mechanics B.A. Santamaria was "totally at home in their company – in fact sitting down with them on an oil barrel, sharing their lunch, discussing the ways of the world in an unselfconscious way and being very reluctant to end the conversation. Despite the inconsistencies... I think there is something of the real Bob here..."<sup>672</sup>

## ASIAN MIGRANTS

In the 1960s Santamaria shifted his focus away from the Italians and onto South East Asia. This thesis will only make a brief summary as there would be a thesis on its own when looking at Santamaria and South East Asia. According to Patrick Morgan, Santamaria "set up the Movement in Asia, or really to co-ordinate already existing Asian Social Action and anti-communist operations to provide a headquarters in Melbourne through his facilities, and to train potential Asian leaders in Belloc House as Christian operatives back in Asia."<sup>673</sup>

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<sup>671</sup> Colin Jory, "The Remarkable Santamaria: A 75<sup>th</sup> Birthday Appraisal", *Quadrant*, September 1990, p.59.

<sup>672</sup> Brendan Rodway, Letter to the author, June 6 2007, (ACA).

From its beginnings the Movement began to warn against Communism coming to Australia from Asia. In the earliest issues of *Freedom* it argued: “The Australian tradition of hostility to European immigrants is suicidal. If we don’t want an Asiatic invasion we must welcome European immigration, and make Labor feel at home in their new country.”<sup>674</sup> In 1948 writing under the name John Williams, B.A. Santamaria argued that Australia “will be swallowed by Asia. Either by conquest or by infiltration”; therefore Australia would cease to be European.<sup>675</sup>

But in 1953 the NCRM published a pamphlet in which it argued: “for how long will we expect the Asian peoples to believe in the sincerity of our Christian faith, while we send missionaries to convert them to Christianity, but at the same time tell them that because of their color and their blood they are not wanted in Australia...”<sup>676</sup> *News Weekly* challenged racial superiority in other parts of the world, for example in South Africa, where it challenged the Prime Minister of South Africa, Daniel François Malan, in his attitude “to racial problems...” *News Weekly* argued, “Malan's view of native and other non-European races in South Africa is a denial of the brotherhood of man, under the fatherhood of God.”<sup>677</sup>

In 1959 at a Rural Conference – held at the same time that the ALP was arguing for fewer non-British migrants (which obviously was an attack on Southern European migration) – B.A. Santamaria and the NCRM took the unprecedented step of stating that Asians should be admitted to Australia.<sup>678</sup> According to Santamaria “what was decisive in the considerations of the delegates to the rural convention was the moral challenge

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<sup>673</sup> Morgan, *op.cit.* p.543.

<sup>674</sup> *Freedom*, November 6 1943, p.1.

<sup>675</sup> John Williams, *The Duties of Christians in Public Life*, (ANSCA: Melbourne, 1948) p.1.

<sup>676</sup> *Migration to Australia*, (NCRM: Melbourne, 1953), p.12.

<sup>677</sup> *News Weekly*, 22 April 1953, p.13.

implicit in the total exclusion of individuals on the ground of race alone.”<sup>679</sup> But as with all things progressive, Santamaria had to end the conference in a patriotic tone: “we are entitled to refuse the citizens of any nation which demands the recognition of the so called double–nationality.”<sup>680</sup> Of course, Britons were the exception.

But his position in 1959 was dictated by the bold statement issued by Archbishop Mannix at the beginning of the conference: “that the total exclusion of Asians from Australia should be abandoned and that we should admit a sufficient number of different races to dispel forever the myth of racial superiority inherent in the so-called ‘White Australia Policy.’”<sup>681</sup> This is in stark contrast to the response of Santamaria who seemingly tried to water down Mannix’s letter by still insisting on a largely European population and predominately Christian culture in Australia.<sup>682</sup>

It was the Democratic Labor Party that became the first party to renounce the White Australia policy. In 1962 at its Victorian Conference the “Victorian Conference of the D.L.P. requests Federal Executive to redraft the Immigration Policy to eliminate the racial discrimination in the present White Australia Policy.”<sup>683</sup> The Australian Labor Party, on the other hand and through Arthur Calwell, argued that there would be no alternation to the current policy of the White Australia Policy: “let us be honest with ourselves and with our Asian and African neighbours. They know, as well as we do, that people with skins of different pigmentation cannot, as yet, live happily side by side with the same community or geographical unit...”<sup>684</sup>

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<sup>678</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “The NCRM in 1959-1960” Proceedings of the 20<sup>th</sup> National Convention, Warnambool, Victoria, Australia, May 1960, p.10.

<sup>679</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “Reflections on the White Australia Policy”, *Twentieth Century*, Vol.13, Winter 1959, p.339.

<sup>680</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>681</sup> *Rural Life*, June 1959, p.3.

<sup>682</sup> *Rural Life*, June 1959, pp.52-56.

<sup>683</sup> K. Rivett (ed) *Immigration: Control or Colour Bar?* (Melbourne University Press: Melbourne, 1962) p.162.

<sup>684</sup> *ibid.* p.161.



Asian migration did have its critics within the Movement. Mr P.H. Hughes of Oatley, NSW, a long time Movement supporter wrote in 1955: "...Mr Editor, if it's going to be the policy of your journal to espouse the entry, either restricted or otherwise of the Asian races.... then I am of the opinion that the days of NSW are numbered..."<sup>685</sup>

While Calwell remained firm in his opposition to Asian immigration, B.A. Santamaria continued to challenge those individual decisions like the case of the Japanese children who wanted to be united with their Australian father: "The Japanese children are fortunate that the Kingdom of Heaven has no White Australia Policy." In fact, continued B.A. Santamaria, "Christ himself presumably wouldn't have been able to get into Australia since an inhabitant of Palestine is an Asiatic."<sup>686</sup> *News Weekly* went even further arguing that Calwell's policy was "anti-Christian" and "anti-Australian" as well as being "anti-Labor".<sup>687</sup> In his autobiography, *Against the Tide*, written somewhat later, Santamaria praises Calwell's position on immigration and his insistence on the White Australia policy by writing: "His immigration policy – in which his performance was blotted only by occasional incidents ... – demonstrated qualities of first class statesmanship."<sup>688</sup>

In the NCRM, during the 1960s there were resolutions and much discussion about helping their Asian neighbours, even resolutions to invite an Asian family into one's farming region. But at the end of the day, the NCRM failed to assist any Asian migrants. It continued to provide foreign aid and to help to bring the end of the White Australia

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<sup>685</sup> *News Weekly*, May 11 1955, p.6.

<sup>686</sup> B.A. Santamaria, "The Kingdom of Heaven has no White Australia Policy" *The Advocate*, October 4 1962, p.22.

<sup>687</sup> *News Weekly*, February 17 1954, p.1.

<sup>688</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.78.

Policy, but the NCRM never had to deal directly with migrants themselves and never moved beyond its Anglo-Saxon make-up.

Meanwhile in Asia, with the Vietnam War in progress, Santamaria set up the Pacific Institute (PI) with Frank Mount as its full-time employee. The aim of the PI was ultimately to set up a political party whose aim “was intended to be the party to rule South Vietnam if the South won the war.”<sup>689</sup> But with the eventual fall of South Vietnam this project came to nothing.

## FILEF

In the 1970s, Italian migrants once again took centre stage for Santamaria when a minor welfare organization set up to assist Italian migrants opened in Melbourne. B.A.

Santamaria ran a strong campaign against them. FILEF, the Federation of Migrant Workers and their Families, was a “worldwide voluntary organization supported by the Italian Communist Party.”<sup>690</sup> Perhaps it was in his own interests or in the interests of his Italian community or because FILEF was funded by the Italian Communist party or both, that B.A. Santamaria found it important. Not since the MIL in the 1940s had the Italian Communists set up shop in Melbourne. It would have been unclear to the stalwarts of the National Civic Council or to the readers of *News Weekly* why FILEF commanded pages of articles in *News Weekly*. Yet, Santamaria was quite aware of its Communist links, hence his exposure of them in *News Weekly*.<sup>691</sup>

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<sup>689</sup> Morgan, *op.cit.* p.547.

<sup>690</sup> S. Battiston, “Salemi v Mackellar Revisited: Drawing Together the Treads of a Controversial Deportation Case, *Journal of Australian Studies*, No.84. 2005, p.1.

NCC members attended FILEF meetings as spies who would then write a detailed report about their meetings. These reports went directly to B.A. Santamaria. In May 1977, Jim Hewatt and Renato Meli were the NCC personnel present in a crowd of 100 participants at a FILEF meeting discussing the fate of Ignazio Salemi.<sup>692</sup> Salemi had come to Australia in 1974 as a FILEF official at a time when the activities of FILEF had expanded considerably; however Melbourne *Age* reporter, Vincent Basile exposed the organization as a Communist front. Salemi had overstayed his visa and, rather than return home, he went into hiding. Salemi who had been on the run from immigration officials for seven weeks was eventually arrested and deported to Italy within hours of his arrest.<sup>693</sup> According to Battiston, “Salemi’s communist background became the pretext to discredit FILEF.”<sup>694</sup>

The 1970s through to the 1980s saw the emergence of multiculturalism. According to Mark Lopez “the ideology of multiculturalism was developed between 1966 and 1975” and adopted by Malcolm Fraser who “introduced it into the Coalition platform for the May 1974 Federal election.”<sup>695</sup> With multiculturalism now becoming a part of the national Australian agenda, B.A. Santamaria should have emerged bolder than ever with his ideas and without the tired anti-Italian feeling that accompanied him in much of his career? Yet B.A. Santamaria did not support multiculturalism. In truth, he became one of its strongest critics. This is in spite of his earlier writings – as early as 1966, where in the *Price of Freedom*, he boldly stated that “we simply will not succeed unless we adopt the

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<sup>691</sup> *News Weekly*, April 2 1975, p.4; June 2 1976, p.4; June 4 1975, p.4; May 7 1975, p.5; April 30 1975, p.4.

<sup>692</sup> Report on Meeting at Albion Hall, Lygon Street, May 16 1977, (NCC).

<sup>693</sup> *Sun*, October 20 1977, (newspaper clipping).

<sup>694</sup> Battiston, *op.cit.* p.10.

<sup>695</sup> M. Lopez, “The Politics of the Origins of Multiculturalism: Lobbying and the Power of Influence”, *People and Place*. Vol.8, No.1. 2000, p.4.

concept of cultural pluralism.”<sup>696</sup> This statement which we would say today refers to multiculturalism was well ahead of its time.

Yet on a closer analysis, one can argue that Santamaria never really argued against the White Australia Policy and in 1966 he still argued that “the admission to Australia of people of other cultures” had to be measured by the rate at which they could be “merged into a common culture.”<sup>697</sup>

In *News Weekly* in 1988 he insisted that while “learning from them [other cultures] and absorbing the best in them, the Australian culture (largely British derived ) is to be insisted on as the foundation stone of the Australian system.”<sup>698</sup> Also, writing at the height of the debate on multiculturalism, *News Weekly* set forth its principles, the main one being that the government had an overriding responsibility to determine the racial mixture; with that said it added that Australia’s best “migrants are its own babies...”<sup>699</sup>

Writing to James Gobbo, Santamaria did state that he had no difficulty with multiculturalism as Gobbo had defined it in an address he had previously given. But Santamaria showed an intolerance in his letter to Gobbo arguing that multiculturalism was being pushed by the Greek community who were “left-wing in political orientation” and by the Arab Press. Santamaria went further on to add in his letter that “the ultimate danger... is political fragmentation, a danger which will grow in population as we – rightly – admit as migrants more and more families who derive from totally alien cultures. A particularly difficult problem arises in this regard with militant Islam.”<sup>700</sup> James Gobbo, an advocate of multiculturalism and later chairman of the Australian Multicultural

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<sup>696</sup> B.A. Santamaria, *The Price of Freedom: the Movement after 10 years*, (Hawthorn Press: Melbourne, 1966), p.133.

<sup>697</sup> Santamaria, *Point of View*, p.249.

<sup>698</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “Multi-Culturalism: Shadow and Substance”, *News Weekly*, December 14 1988, p.16.

Foundation, attempted to unite those opposed to multiculturalism, like Santamaria with those who argued that multiculturalism didn't go far enough. Gobbo, attempted a consensus, which he presented later in 1995 as a working model from multiculturalism.<sup>701</sup>

Appearing at a conference, B.A. Santamaria argued that the only excuse for his speaking at a conference on multiculturalism was that he “appears to epitomise the meaning usually attributed to the word multiculturalism.”<sup>702</sup> Yet, according to B.A. Santamaria multiculturalism leads to ethnic separatism.”<sup>703</sup>

Towards the end of his life, when B.A. Santamaria could have openly promoted his ideas in this new multicultural Australia, the organization he created and the conservative forces that supported it made it impossible. The Movement and the NCC were no longer the social democrats with progressive ideas on race, immigration and refugees. Rather they became overly patriotic supporting nationalist and anti-immigration causes.

When Pauline Hanson came on the scene, Santamaria never publicly denounced her. In fact, Hanson's advisor John Pasquarelli, of an Italian background himself, but hostile to migrants and even more hostile to multiculturalism, even wrote for the journal *The Council for the National Interest* begun by Santamaria.<sup>704</sup> Santamaria himself never supported multiculturalism and even argued strongly against dual nationalities.

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<sup>699</sup> *News Weekly*, September 14 1988, p.2.

<sup>700</sup> B.A. Santamaria, letter to James Gobbo, September 25 1990, cited in full in Morgan, *op.cit.* p.477.

<sup>701</sup> Sir James Gobbo, “Criticism of Multiculturalism” at the 1995 Global Cultural Diversity Conference Proceedings, 1995, available online – [www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au)

<sup>702</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “One Nation, one Flag, One People”, *Multicultural Australia? Ethnic Claims and Religious Values*. (Galatians Group: Melbourne, 1995), p.39.

<sup>703</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>704</sup> Adam Indikt, “Pauline's Puppeteer” *The Australia/Israel Review*. October 21 1996, online edition.

Even former opponents from the left have often remarked on the strange conservative position on multiculturalism and immigration taken by Santamaria: “Even on the question of multiculturalism and immigration, on which their standpoint in the 1940s was very civilised and progressive for the period, they are now ultra-conservative.”<sup>705</sup>

Gerard Henderson in an article in July 1997 lamented how Santamaria’s organisation that once stood up for minorities began to show an intolerance: “How odd, again, that on such issues such as immigration, Santamaria’s contemporary fellow travellers stand close to the anti-immigration Greens and their ideological antagonists in the Lunar Right.”<sup>706</sup>

Daniel Mandel from the *Australian Israel Review* remarks on how “Jews in Australia had reason to appreciate his [Santamaria’s] opposition to anti-Semitism in earlier times.” But now in the 1980s it was “with a sense of sorrow rather than anger that many Jews greeted a distinct cooling of relations.”<sup>707</sup> According to Mandel: “the insistent editorials of his publications, *News Weekly*, replete with assertions of Jewish strong arming of the Australian Government on the subject [War Crimes Legislation] estranged many Jewish friends.”<sup>708</sup> But it wasn’t only the issue of War Crimes Legalisation that worried Mandel; it was also Santamaria’s opposition to migrants from Muslim countries and his “carping” on dual loyalty and dual citizenship.<sup>709</sup>

Despite his bizarre opposition to multiculturalism and dual nationalities, Santamaria spent the last few years of his life telling interviewers that his values were “peasant” values and his ideas were Italian. He also stated, in many interviews, that he looked forward mostly to his Sunday’s pasta night with his extended family.

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<sup>705</sup> Bob Gould, “Bob Santamaria: A Reminiscence of the Great Labor Split”, *Oz Left*, December 4 1997, online edition.

<sup>706</sup> Gerard Henderson, “Ideologies of a desert Island”, *The Age*, July 29 1997, p.15.

<sup>707</sup> D. Mandel, “Cold Warriors don’t die, they just fade away”, *The Australia/Israel Review*, March 12 1998, online edition.

<sup>708</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>709</sup> *ibid.*

## SANTAMARIA'S FINAL YEARS: THE FAMILY AND THE MOVEMENT

According to his daughter Mary Helen Woods, her father cooked pasta for his entire extended family: “we get together every Sunday night: the children and the grandchildren.”<sup>710</sup> To Santamaria his Sunday’s pasta night was a highlight and the reason why the family met was “...not basically because it’s a rule, it’s because I think we want to get together.”<sup>711</sup>

It was a strange set of circumstances, quite paradoxical. Here was a man, proclaiming his ideas were Italian and that he was at home in his peasant background while the organization that he led with complete devotion, was intolerant, anti-immigration and quite the opposite to the so-called private world of Santamaria. He didn’t have any so called Italian-Australian friends.<sup>712</sup>

Near the end of his life, B.A. Santamaria, who went to meet his brothers at Princes Park where they would walk on the flanks of the ground praying the rosary and discussing the football, Santamaria recalled to Robin Hughes that his world was Princes Park, Brunswick and St Ambrose, Brunswick.<sup>713</sup>

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<sup>710</sup> Mary Helen Woods, “The Family Behind the Man”, *News Weekly*, March 21 1998, p.10.

<sup>711</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Interview with Robin Hughes, op.cit.

<sup>712</sup> I recalled in 2001, when Nino Randazzo, editor of *Il Globo* and Ivano Ercole from Melbourne’s *Rete Italia* radio station paid me a visit after I had brought out to Australia the leader of the Italian Catholic Movement Sant’ Egidio. Both recalled to me that this was the first visit inside the NCC building. Also a letter of Father Dante Orsi to the author, July 7, 2004, who admired B.A. Santamaria and shared most of his opinions, but never once met him or corresponded with him, (ACA).

<sup>713</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Interview with Robin Hughes, op.cit.

Martin Sheehan, to whom Santamaria was mentor in the late 1980s when he worked for the Movement, shares an interesting personal insight into B.A. Santamaria: “He also loved [ the film ] *The God Father*: not because of the violence and gangsterism, but he liked the image of the southern Italian, father of the big Italian clan, defender of the immigrants against the Anglo Establishment. He particularly loved the scene where the God Father dies playing with his little grandson – I’ve always thought he would’ve liked to go out in a similar way ....”<sup>714</sup>

When death was imminent, B.A. Santamaria left his second family, the Movement, and embraced his own family, surrounded by them until he went into a coma and finally died. This upset many of the Movement personal who resented the family taking Santamaria and closing the doors to them during his final hours.

## CONCLUSION

In the previous chapter B.A. Santamaria emerged from his Italian background with the usual obligations of the *domus*. In this chapter, B.A. Santamaria moved away from the *domus* while still maintaining an interest in the Italian community. But when it came to the injustices of the internments, the evidence shows an absent Santamaria. After the war, Santamaria engaged in the Italian community, first with the *Opera*, second with the Land Settlement schemes and thirdly with the post-war Italian migrants and his attempts to recruit them into the Movement. In his view, the Italian migrants were the natural constituents for the Movement. But the engagement with the Italian community, was never for the benefit of the Italians but rather for the ends of the Movement

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<sup>714</sup> Martin Sheehan, Letter to the author, June 6 2007, (ACA).



From 1939 to his death Santamaria's culture underwent a change. His culture was now the culture of the Movement and all his initiatives had only rewards or benefits for the Movement. His attempt to engage the Italian community was a complete failure. As Des Cahill rightly argues: "... he [B.A. Santamaria] was committed to coopting his Italian compatriots into his Movement, which evolved into the National Civic Council. However, he was never to succeed."<sup>715</sup> Even towards Asia, the rationale was the same; it was for the Movement's sake and no one else. His statements towards the Asian community were measured and careful and he never really argued for abolition of the White Australia Policy.

In the following chapter we will explore statements by B.A. Santamaria that refer to his Italian background.

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<sup>715</sup> Des Cahill, *Missionaries on the Move*, (Center for Migration Studies: New York, 2004), p.140.

## CHAPTER 6:

### WHAT B.A. SANTAMARIA SAID ABOUT HIS BACKGROUND

This chapter will aim to interpret Santamaria's own understanding of his identity through an interpretation of his own writings. Therefore, in this chapter, B.A. Santamaria will give examples of his identity through his writings. Since B.A. Santamaria wrote, spoke and taught for over 60 years there is a vast selection of material that the author can access. In order to keep to the focus on the thesis, and not to be overwhelmed by the vast amount of material available, the writings of B.A. Santamaria selected for this chapter primarily relate to his background. The chapter will also include analysis on identity, space and place and how, in light of Santamaria's own writings, he can be interpreted within such concepts.

B.A. Santamaria begins his autobiography, *Against the Tide*, with the following sentence: "autobiographical writings tend to be an essay in self-indulgence."<sup>716</sup> Graham Greene, on the other hand, interpreted the autobiography as a "sort of life" that may contain fewer errors than a biography but is more selective than a biography.<sup>717</sup> When writing about his own background, Santamaria has been very selective.

There is no doubt that Santamaria could read, write and converse in Italian, although Santamaria reminds us, time and time again, that his first language wasn't Italian but Aeolian. His emphasis on this is to point out that there is a world of difference between

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<sup>716</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.15.

<sup>717</sup> Graham Greene, *A Sort of Life*, (Bodley Head: London, 1971), p.9.

the Aeolian language and the Italian language. Yet on his deathbed, B.A. Santamaria was able to converse with the Apostolic Delegate, Franco Brambilla in fluent Italian.<sup>718</sup>

B.A. Santamaria's writings are divided into several stages. The first stage was prior to Italy's entry in the Second World War in June 1940. The second stage was from the beginning of Italy's entry in the war until the Labor Party split of 1955. The third stage was from the split until the 1980s. This was the period when the debate shifted from the abolition of the "White Australia Policy" to the beginnings of "Multiculturalism." The final stage was from the 1980s until his death; in this period, "Multiculturalism" was in place and here Santamaria began to reminisce and argue that his ideas were a product of his Italian peasant upbringing.

When looking at the writing of Santamaria, one finds that it is journalistic and at times repetitive. He uses common phrases such as "what is to be done", "the task is" and "figures don't lie" – to name only a few. He would also present his arguments in the traditional point form, premise followed by premise with a "therefore" conclusion. Santamaria also quoted from a vast array of sources from Australia, Europe and the United States. This is of course easy to do in our modern Internet world, but there was no such means in Santamaria's day.

When it comes to *News Weekly*, the position taken by John Barich in his Masters thesis is quite accurate. Barich argues "one of the difficulties faced by the writer has been to differentiate statements of Santamaria and those of the council [Movement]. After some consideration, it was decided that they be taken as synonymous not only because of the

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<sup>718</sup> Kieran Ryan, "B.A. Santamaria" St Mary's Cathedral, July 8 1998, (NCC).

difficulty of unravelling the two, but also because they would only differ in exceptional circumstances, due to the nature of the organization.”<sup>719</sup>

## **BEFORE THE WAR**

When looking at the literature written by B.A. Santamaria before the Second World War, we find that his writings focussed primarily on Italians, and Italy in general.

The first known writing from B.A. Santamaria is his Masters’ thesis, “Italy Changes Its Shirts”. Writing this in 1934, Santamaria’s aim was to “indicate how the weakness of the Italian Government after 1870 resulted in its failure to solve every major problem with which it was confronted.”<sup>720</sup> The thesis was personal in as much as Santamaria had visited the Aeolian Islands as a child with his parents and this visit had a profound impact. Writing in the thesis, Santamaria states “in many of the small villages which cover the landscape in Central and Southern Italy, there are cathedrals dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Century. One such church with which the writer is personally acquainted is typical of many others.”<sup>721</sup>

The year 1934 was a significant year for the young Santamaria and the thesis was not the only writing on Italian fascism undertaken by Santamaria. Santamaria also spoke on fascism at a public forum at Melbourne University, defending the question on whether the “fascist revolutions have been really revolutionary, that is whether they have meant a

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<sup>719</sup> Barich, op.cit. p.7.

<sup>720</sup> Santamaria, “Italy Changes its Shirts”, p.1.

<sup>721</sup> *ibid*, p.4.

definite break with the traditions of the nineteenth century in the internal and international spheres.”<sup>722</sup>

The 1934 thesis was hardly an endorsement for fascism. Rather, the thesis merely shows how fascism in Italy came about. Moreover, it also demonstrated that Santamaria was well aware of the prejudices towards the Southern Italian: “The attitude of the average Italian was a modified form of that which prevails in Anglo-Saxon countries. They regarded the Southern peasant as a being of inferior mentality, incapable of the same intellectual achievements as the inhabitant of the North.”<sup>723</sup> These comments were challenging, especially when later in life he regarded himself more of an Italian of the North.<sup>724</sup>

While on the family, Santamaria wrote on the connection between the life of the farm and politics: “... Its citizens have the peasant mentality... Clinging fiercely to his small farm... on which his family is born and bred, the farmer centres his whole life on it. He will judge the success or failure of a government by the extent to which his and his neighbour’s farm prospers or decays.”<sup>725</sup>

What is evident in the 1934 thesis was that the time that Santamaria spent on the island was still fresh in his memory, particularly the religious festivals: “In the little island of Salina... the main festival is one of the virgin... the enthusiasm is remarkable. As the great feast approaches visitors from neighbouring islands and even from far away Sicily flock to the island and the hospitality of every family is taxed to the upmost... The day is

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<sup>722</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “Open Forum- Santamaria on Fascism”, *Farrago*, June 13 1934, copy provided to the author by Paul Ormonde.

<sup>723</sup> Santamaria, “Italy Changes its Shirts”, p.93.

<sup>724</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Interview by Robin Hughes, op.cit.

<sup>725</sup> *ibid.* p.12.

passed in processions, meeting of religious confraternities, and reunion of old friends....

It is indeed impossible to describe on paper.”<sup>726</sup>

In 1939, B.A. Santamaria published an article in the *Australasian Catholic Record* with the unfortunate title: “The Italian Problem in Australia”. I say unfortunate, because the label of the “Italian problem” has remained on the Italian community right until recent times.<sup>727</sup> The article looked at why Italians were not attending Mass and the sacraments and what could be done about it. Fr Ugo Modotti also heavily edited the article.

As in his 1934 article, Santamaria in his 1939 article identifies himself with the Aeolian culture: “The writer can personally bear witness to the important role the social life of the inhabitants of one small island in the Lipari group, played by one festival of Our Lady.”<sup>728</sup> He continues to write: “The most significant point is that for the best part of a week, all secular activities were suspended in honour of Our Lady. In Australia there is... no celebration which can compare with this...”<sup>729</sup> It is important to go now into the future, in order to highlight the older Santamaria’s view of this celebration, through the recollection of his son Paul Santamaria:

I was somewhat dismayed when, as a visitor to Salina in 1984, I telephoned Dad to tell him that I had visited the church at Valdechiesa, said to have been a place of an apparition of the Mother of Christ. Dad, in a mischievous voice, suggested I absorb the folklore of the Islands with a healthy grain of salt!<sup>730</sup>

Back to the 1939 article, Santamaria tackled the social exclusion towards Italians, in the Church and in general, when he argued: “Yet, it would be unrealistic to deny that there

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<sup>726</sup> *ibid.* p.11.

<sup>727</sup> F. Lewins, “The Italian problem in Australia: forty years later”, *Australasian Catholic Record*, No.56, Vol.1. January 1979, pp. 3-10.

<sup>728</sup> Santamaria, “The Italian Problem in Australia”, p.293

<sup>729</sup> *ibid.* p.294.

<sup>730</sup> Paul Santamaria, Letter to the author, August 16 2006, (ACA)

exists, between Australians...and Italians... a vague and disturbing lack of sympathy.”<sup>731</sup>

B.A. Santamaria continues “...the newspapers periodically try to whip up anti-Italian sentiments, and their campaigns are supported by shoals of letters detailing all the worst qualities of the Italian.”<sup>732</sup> Santamaria then shares an insight: “only one who has first-hand experience of the Italian problem can realise the enormous damage which has been caused by the currency of the word ‘dago’. To the Italian, the term is an unforgivable insult.”<sup>733</sup> As he does in his 1934 thesis, Santamaria clearly makes known to his readers how hurtful were such negative remarks about the Italian community.

When Santamaria first wrote the 1939 article, he had submitted it to Fr Ugo Modotti for comment. Fr Modotti, in turn, offered five pages of notes and suggested changes.

Perhaps the most important changes were towards the end of the article and where reference is made to the religious revival of Catholicism in Italy. In his notes, Fr Modotti wrote: “I do not think the author is quite correct.... The author seems to attribute too often the religious revival of Italy to the new fascist regime.”<sup>734</sup> He then suggested the following paragraph be inserted: “...the actual revival is due to the CA [Catholic Action] Movement which in Italy has worked miracles, and in many instances, especially in the problems of youth and education, worked within bitter opposition from the Fascist Movement.”<sup>735</sup> In the final published article that appeared in the *Australian Catholic Record*, Modotti’s paragraph, only slightly edited, was used.<sup>736</sup>

What is unfortunate in the article is the solution that Santamaria proposes to the lack of Italian participation in the Church: “...the only solution to the cultural problem presented

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<sup>731</sup> Santamaria, “The Italian Problem in Australia”, p.294.

<sup>732</sup> *ibid.* p.295

<sup>733</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>734</sup> Fr Ugo Modotti, “Handwritten notes on the Italian Problem in Australia”, Undated- circa 1939, Jesuit Archives, Melbourne Province.

<sup>735</sup> *ibid.*

by the Italians in Australia on which the solution of the religious problem will ultimately depend is on the basis of assimilation.”<sup>737</sup>

In conclusion, before the Second World War, it is quite clear that the young Santamaria, still living in Brunswick and not married, had his focus on issues related to his Italian background. This was to change with Italy’s entry in the war and with his moving away from Brunswick and the *domus*.

## 1940 TO 1954 – BEFORE THE SPLIT

Just prior to Italy entering the Second World War on the side of Germany, B.A. Santamaria published a pamphlet entitled: *What the Church has done for the Worker*. The focus of the pamphlet was Europe and in it Santamaria demonstrated how the Church helped to eliminate slavery, arguing that in the Roman Empire workers were slaves, and that through Christianity slavery was eventually abolished.<sup>738</sup> He also argued that workers in the Middle Ages were better off than the workers of his day because of the Medieval Guilds.<sup>739</sup> Although in the pamphlet Italy is not mentioned, Italian aspects such as the Roman Empire and the ancient King of Sicily are cited.

At the time of his writing, fascism dominated the European scene, with Mussolini, Hitler and Franco in Spain. None of these leaders are mentioned, but the pamphlet does acknowledge other leaders: “it would be unjust in this context not to acknowledge the great inspiration which Salazar in Portugal and de Valera in Ireland have drawn from the

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<sup>736</sup> Santamaria, “The Italian problem in Australia”, p.304.

<sup>737</sup> *ibid.* p.305.



social doctrines of the Church.”<sup>740</sup> There is no mention of exiled leaders like Sturzo or de Gasperi who after the war formed the Christian Democratic Movement. In fact, it would be these men and the Christian Democratic Movement that Santamaria would later on promote as an example of the Christian Social Justice in action. At the time of writing this pamphlet both Sturzo and de Gasperi were in exile because of the fascist regime of Mussolini - an important point never recognised by Santamaria at the time when Mussolini was in power.

Now with Italy in the war and with Italians as enemy aliens, Santamaria was placed in an awkward situation. During this period Santamaria dedicated himself to the work of the NCRM and his focus was on rural issues. Therefore when speaking at the National Rural Conference in 1941, B.A. Santamaria remarked “you will probably wonder why I, a Collins Street man, am here at this gathering, which is trying to solve the problems of farmers.”<sup>741</sup> The reason for noting such a statement is the choice of location that B.A. Santamaria used to describe himself. It was not as a working class Brunswick boy, but rather by his place of employment, Collins Street, Melbourne.

In 1942, still writing on rural issues in *Self-Government and the Land: War Agricultural Committee Organisation*, Santamaria used examples from Roman times arguing that the war conditions in Australia resemble “those of the Roman citizen in the hard days of Septimius Severus.”<sup>742</sup>

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<sup>738</sup> B.A. Santamaria, *What the Church has done for the Worker. Part 1*, (Australian Catholic Truth Society: Melbourne, 1940), p.11.

<sup>739</sup> *ibid.*, p.20.

<sup>740</sup> *ibid.* p.29.

<sup>741</sup> “An Earthly Paradise”, Report of the Rural Conference, held at Wagga, Wagga, NSW, June 16-19 1941, p.9.

<sup>742</sup> B.A. Santamaria, *Self-Government and the Land: War Agricultural Committee Organisation*, (National Catholic Rural Movement: Melbourne, 1942), p.2

In 1945, B.A. Santamaria published a detailed book entitled *The Earth, Our Mother*. The book was written during 1944 and it argued for a decentralist Australia based on small independent farms rather than large farms, operated by families who strived for self-sufficiency as the solution to Australia's population crisis. It was one of two books – apart from his autobiography – that Santamaria produced throughout his life. B.A. Santamaria stated that the “defence of rural life... must take precedence over every other policy designed for the preservation of Australia as a nation of European stock...”<sup>743</sup> There is no mention of his parent's homeland at all except a passing reference to the successful land settlement schemes in Libya. Even with the appending call for post war migrants, there is no mention of Italian migrants being in the mix of newcomers. His sources are also interesting. There is, however, reference to Mons Ligutti who organised the housing plan at Granger, USA.<sup>744</sup>

In this book, Santamaria promotes regionalism without any reference to immigration. According to Santamaria, the “lure of the cities has a fatal magnetism.” According to Santamaria: “No sooner have families been drawn to the cities than their natural fertility has fallen to catastrophic levels.”<sup>745</sup>

*The Earth Our Mother* had all the virtues of Santamaria's Italian descent and culture except rather than promoting the land of his background, which was at the time at war with Australia, B.A. Santamaria chose to keep a safe distance from his background: “Between the real peasantry of the property less agricultural labourers of Central and Southern Europe, and the scientific, self-contained farm economy which has been made possible largely by the use of electricity, there is nothing in common. The one is degrading, the

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<sup>743</sup> B.A. Santamaria, *The Earth, Our Mother*, (Araluen: Melbourne, 1945), p.12.

<sup>744</sup> *ibid* p.144.

<sup>745</sup> *ibid* p.128.

other opens up limitless possibilities not only of prosperity and stability, but of creative craftsmanship on the part of every member of the farm family.”<sup>746</sup>

It was clear in this volume that B.A. Santamaria has read and included many of the ideas of the US Southern Agrarians, particularly Herbert Agar. Agar, himself, in 1945, had diverted away from his previous distributist writings.<sup>747</sup> In Australia, on the other hand, B.A. Santamaria kept Agar’s writings alive by quoting him in his book and in speeches given for the National Catholic Rural Movement Conference. At an executive meeting of the NCRM, B.A. Santamaria also encouraged the other executive members to read Agar.<sup>748</sup> The reason why Agar is mentioned is important. Mussolini too had land settlement schemes in Libya. Santamaria was well aware of them; he even promoted the Libyan model to Harold Holt, the later Minister for Immigration. As well as this, Santamaria also promoted other land settlement thinkers such as Agar and Ligutti. Nevertheless, critics of Santamaria – too keen to associate him with fascism – fail to acknowledge other land settlement sources that he used, only highlighting Mussolini’s schemes. This point will be further explored in chapter seven.

In 1945 Santamaria also drafted the bishop’s statement *The Land is Your Business*. The statement, similar to *The Earth Our Mother*, promoted a decentralised population and even took a quote from Archbishop John Panico.<sup>749</sup> There was no mention of Italian migration, but there was an echo of an alarming Asian problem: “The future is pretty grim, 1,000,000 Asiatics... within a week’s flying time of Australia.”<sup>750</sup>

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<sup>746</sup> *Ibid.* p.66.

<sup>747</sup> Edward S. Shapiro, introduction to *Who Own’s America? A New Declaration of Independence*, edited by H. Agar and Allen Tate, (ISI Books: Delaware, 1999), p.xxxiv.

<sup>748</sup> Minutes of the Meeting of the Ecclesiastical sub-Committee of the National Catholic Rural Movement. undated, circa 1945, (NCC).

<sup>749</sup> *The Land is Your Business*, reproduced in full in Hogan, *op.cit.* p.65.

In 1948, B.A. Santamaria drafted the Australian Bishops Social Justice Statement *Socialisation*, which he argued was the most successful statement he drafted.<sup>751</sup> The document looked at government intervention in the social and economic life of the nation. Like many of his statements of this period, Santamaria avoids Italian sources, rather using sources such as the Labor Party of Great Britain, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Paul Derrick and Colin Clark.

It was at the end of the decade, as Italy entered the war at the beginning on the wrong side, that Santamaria began (somewhat cautiously) to mention Italian migrants. During the 1950s, with debates on migration and with the concerns about the number of Southern European migrants, in particular Italians, Santamaria promoted their virtues, albeit cautiously.

In another Social Justice article by Santamaria in 1951 entitled *The Future of Australia*, he combined “the yellow peril and the red peril” coming from Asia.<sup>752</sup> The way to combat such a peril, according to this statement, was found in the “program of European migration” provided that these “migrants are properly absorbed into the Australian community...”.<sup>753</sup> What were to be the nationalities of these migrants is not mentioned, but what was mentioned was “the tiny Irish nation, because it possessed a strong and living faith...”.<sup>754</sup>

In 1952, when reacting to the objection raised by Menzies towards Land Settlement schemes, Santamaria wrote to Harold Holt stating: “I would submit that this rather harsh judgment is not borne out by the facts. Anyone who has seen the highly productive

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<sup>750</sup> *ibid.* p.66.

<sup>751</sup> *Socialization* reproduced in full in Hogan, *op.cit.* p.66.

<sup>752</sup> *The Future of Australia*, reproduced in full in Hogan, *op.cit.* p. 135.

Danish, Dutch, or North Italian farms and the full and satisfying life which they offer can hardly maintain this thesis.”<sup>755</sup> Yet, B.A. Santamaria could have also cited Italian farms in Griffith or Northern Queensland and what about Southern Italians?

When it came to foreign affairs, *News Weekly* took an Italian line, particularly when debate raged on the annexation of the Free Territory of Trieste, which had been occupied by an Allied Military Government, comprising American and (mainly) British forces since the Second World War. *News Weekly* argued that both Yugoslavia and Italy had claim to the territory, Italy on ethnological grounds and Yugoslavia on historical grounds. According to *News Weekly* “in this case ethnological has the greater weight.”<sup>756</sup>

However it was the task of getting more Italian migrants into Australia that Santamaria devoted his writing. He did in the 1953 Social Justice Statement, *Land Without People*, where he pointed out the refugee crisis: “In Germany there are nine million refugees... In Italy there are 10 million people more than the economy can provide for in conditions befitting human dignity.”<sup>757</sup>

Therefore, during this period which started with war and had Italians as the enemy of the Commonwealth, Santamaria wrote, taught and published without any references to Italians. Towards the end of this period, however, with immigration debates all the rage, Santamaria carefully emerged supporting Italian migrants, but only with articles where his name remained anonymous, like the Australian bishops statement.

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<sup>753</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>754</sup> *ibid.* p.139.

<sup>755</sup> B.A. Santamaria to Harold Holt, November 20,1942, (NCRM).

## THE SPLIT AND BEYOND

During the split, critics of Santamaria used his name as a weapon and as a consequence Santamaria went quiet on issues related to his background.

In 1955, writing to his friend James McAuley, B.A. Santamaria outlined the differences between Australian and the Latin notions of Catholic Action: “I suggested that the title ‘Catholic Action in Australia’ was rather badly chosen, not because I objected to the phraseology of that particular pamphlet, but simply because I believe that the words ‘Catholic Action’ were at all times inappropriate in Australia. As you know they are a literal translation of the Latin ‘Actio Catholica’. The literal Latin meaning and the Italian translation have a different connotation from the words ‘Catholic Action’ in Australia. In the Latin countries the phrase signifies more than the normal expansion of Catholic life and knowledge. In Australia the phrase, granted the non-Catholic mentality of the majority of the population, signifies to the ordinary person some form of overt action on the part of the Catholic Church in fields in which it should not intervene.”<sup>758</sup> This point Santamaria emphasised once more in his autobiography, some 25 years later.

During the split, Santamaria wrote very little about immigration and about any issues relating to his background. With the ALP using his background as grounds to appeal to the prejudices of the population, Santamaria had no choice but to avoid any references to Italians and his Italian background. Notwithstanding, *News Weekly* still dedicated a page to an article reporting the figures released by the Commonwealth Immigration

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<sup>756</sup> *News Weekly*, October 21 1953, p.9.

<sup>757</sup> Social Justice Statement: *Land Without People*, (ANSCA: Melbourne, 1953), p.8.

<sup>758</sup> B.A. Santamaria to James McAuley, May 30 1955, reproduced in full in Morgan, *op.cit.* p.114.

Advisory Council in Canberra, which showed that the crime rate from Southern Europeans was “less than one-quarter the proportionate rate for Australia.”<sup>759</sup>

Still Santamaria made little reference to Italians or to his background. When he did, he treated Italy as a negative as was the case when State aid for Catholic schools became a major issue. In 1960, for example, B.A. Santamaria stated that “the tiny Protestant minority in Italy is in the same position as Catholics in Australia.”<sup>760</sup> B.A. Santamaria remarkably goes on to quote the Italian constitution and informs the readers of the article that it was “Mussolini who re-introduced Catholic teaching into the State school structure in Italy.”<sup>761</sup> The reason why Mussolini introduced it, according to B.A. Santamaria, was that Mussolini held that the “overwhelming majority of Italians were Catholic and that to foster any other education divided the nation.”<sup>762</sup> Then again in 1962, when arguing the case for State aid for Catholic schools in Australia, B.A. Santamaria used examples from the Italian government where Catholic instruction in State schools was necessary because of Italy being a Catholic population.<sup>763</sup>

In the aftermath of the Labor Party split and with the emergence of the Democratic Labor Party, the issue of the White Australia policy became a significant topic for debate. It was the DLP that emerged as the historical winners in the sense that they became the first political party in Australia to declare its opposition to the White Australia policy in its constitution. Santamaria remarkably spoke very little on the issue, but on one occasion he defended children of Japanese mothers and Australian fathers.<sup>764</sup>

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<sup>759</sup> *News Weekly*, January 25 1956, p.3.

<sup>760</sup> B.A. Santamaria, *Equality in Education*, (Institute of Social Order: Kew, 1960), p.11.

<sup>761</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>762</sup> *ibid.* p.12.

<sup>763</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “A Catholic Case for State Aid: The Principle Concerns Protestants and Secularists as much as Catholics”, *Bulletin*, July 21 1962, p.28.

It was as late as 1964, speaking to a Jewish audience that Santamaria spoke openly about his Italian background. He did so cautiously, clearly stating that he was born in Australia and his primary interests were in Australia, and that although he was “born of Italian parents” they had been in Australia for “nearly seventy years, and very well assimilated in the Australian community.”<sup>765</sup> Three years earlier, Santamaria had stated that his parents had been in Australia for 60 years, but now in 1964 this had jumped to seventy. The fact was that his father had been in Australia since 1909 and his mother since 1912 – well short of the seventy then claimed by Santamaria. Yet, it may have simply been Santamaria’s way of showing the difference between his Italian background – 70 years and well assimilated – and that of the many new migrants arriving in Australia.

Santamaria continued his 1964 speech by stating: “Through my Italian origin I know what racial prejudice is.... To not a few, I was just a dago. I resented this less than the thought that my parents, who were so outstanding as citizens, were just dagos too.”<sup>766</sup> Santamaria continued: “Santamaria is a dirty word in Australian life: and it was made a dirty word quite consciously by those who knew their power of racial and religious bitterness.”<sup>767</sup> The reason to repeat this quote is to highlight its significance as well as to note that it was the first time since 1939 that Santamaria had something to say about the social exclusion of Italian migrants in Australia.

In 1965 B.A. Santamaria tackled allegations of Mafia activities in Australia. A *Daily Telegraph* article reported on police raids, which took place on Italian homes across Sydney. These raids were “directed at Mafia-type activities which are believed to have

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<sup>764</sup> *The Advocate*, October 4 1962, p.22.

<sup>765</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “Nazi, Communists, Catholics and Jews”, *Twentieth Century*, Vol.19, Spring 1964, p.7.

<sup>766</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>767</sup> *ibid.*



spread from Victoria to most Australian States.”<sup>768</sup> The issue according to Santamaria was that the police had to establish for certain if there was an organisation such as the Mafia in Australia. But, Santamaria argued, if there wasn’t then “the phrase Mafia should not be used, by the police, the newspapers or anyone else...”<sup>769</sup>

In 1966, Santamaria still held an assimilationist position, arguing that “the exclusion of people of other cultures from Australia on a racial basis, is of doubtful moral validity...”. However Santamaria went on to argue “the admission to Australia of people of other cultures has to be measured by the rate at which they can be merged into a common culture.”<sup>770</sup>

In 1968, writing in *News Weekly*, B.A. Santamaria demonstrated his knowledge of Italian political history. Speaking against the notion of the Vatican adopting a policy of dialogue with the left, B.A. Santamaria wrote: “The adoption of dialogue as an official policy, would, in my judgement, prove as mistaken as the liquidation of the Italian Popular Party, which was led by Don Sturzo, at Mussolini’s behest, when the latter had not yet consolidated his power.... When Mussolini was overthrown, and the policy of accommodation with Fascism proved a failure.... It sheds no lustre on Vatican diplomacy to sacrifice men like Sturzo [of the Popular Party]... and later to hope that their moral strength will be large enough to enable them to forget their betrayal and be ‘useful’ to the Church again.”<sup>771</sup> This is the first time, as far as the author can ascertain, that Santamaria mentions the likes of Don Luigi Sturzo, a strong opponent of Mussolini’s fascist regime and a Senator in the post-war Italian Government.

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<sup>768</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “Why Smear Italians” *News Weekly*, November 10 1965, p.16.

<sup>769</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>770</sup> Santamaria, *Point of View*, p.249.

In 1971, *News Weekly* did a feature on the struggles of Italian immigrants in Australia in an article entitled “The Struggle to Get a Start”, where the focus was on a young Italian family. The article pointed out how the Italian trade qualifications of the husband were not recognised in Australia, therefore he had to find an unskilled job at the Ford factory.<sup>772</sup> Yet, the article appeared at the end of the period of Italian migration to Australia. The economics of Italy had picked up and Italians were no longer coming to Australia. Such an article would have been more suitable in the 1950s or the 1960s, but in the 1970s such an article was safe to print and publish.

## IT’S SAFE TO BE ITALIAN

Multiculturalism, according to Ghassam Hage: “merely described the inescapable fact that Australia’s immigration program... had created a society with more than a hundred different minority ethnic cultures that existed with but also transformed – and were transformed by – Australia’s Anglo-Celtic culture.”<sup>773</sup> With the emergence of multiculturalism, the need to prove one’s Australian identity was no longer required. It was now fashionable to be different. In part, some of Santamaria’s writings reflected this change in attitude to migrants.

In 1977 B.A. Santamaria stated that his family was a “peasant family”. This he distinguished from a modern nuclear family: “The nuclear family, our current Western family, diminished though it is in comparison with the extended family of peasant

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<sup>771</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “The Dialogue Controversy”, *News Weekly*, July 17 1968, p.7-8.

<sup>772</sup> *News Weekly*, June 23 1971, p.8.

<sup>773</sup> G. Hage, *Against Paranoid Nationalism: Searching for hope in a Shrinking Society*, (Pluto Press: Annandale, 2003) p.58.

societies...”.<sup>774</sup> Yet, in 1977, B.A. Santamaria’s understanding of Italian migrants was minimal and when Fr M. Reina wrote to him about Italian migrants, Santamaria replied:

I have read your pamphlet with very great care, and I think it is a very valuable short compendium on the Italian migrant situation in Australia.... Your own knowledge of the latest arrival in migrant communities like that of Richmond would, of course, be much better than mine.... since you chose to make it, I am glad that you mentioned the attempt to establish ACLIA.... I do not apologise for being anti-Communist.<sup>775</sup>

In 1979, in an interview in the *Weekend Australian*, B.A. Santamaria argued: “Both of my parents were Italian and my mother assured me that the first time I was given Claret to drink – two drops – was at the age of ten months. We drink wine and whatever else – every member of my family is the same. In that sense we are very much in the European tradition. I don’t go to the pub after work with the boys for a beer. In fact this is one of my weaknesses. I find it quite difficult to have that sort of relationship with anybody. When I go home I have a drink with my family.”<sup>776</sup> Yet once again, it’s the “European tradition” rather than the Italian and it was his parents that were Italian, his culture and descent is not mentioned.

In 1981, B.A. Santamaria wrote his autobiography entitled *Against the Tide*. In his autobiography Santamaria dedicated his first chapter to his family’s background where he states that “as the eldest son, I was expected to take my daily turn in the shop. This went on for years, in fact, until well after I began my studies at Melbourne University”<sup>777</sup> Writing about his family, Santamaria continued: “Even after the children married, they continued to enjoy some of the advantages of the Italian extended family. The reason was that this was the way we were brought up. My mother’s parents lived in Italy, but my

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<sup>774</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “The Breakdown of the Family”, *Social Survey*, September 1977, p.229.

<sup>775</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Letter to Fr M Reina, August 17 1977, reproduced in full in Morgan, *op.cit.* pp.348-349.

<sup>776</sup> D. Wilson, “Profile the Man from The Movement”, *The Weekend Australian Magazine*. February 16-17 1979, pp 2-3

<sup>777</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.5.

father's were in Australia and lived about a mile away. They were as much part of our lives as if they lived in the same house. It was the same for one uncle and two aunts".<sup>778</sup>

On social exclusion, Santamaria stated: "It was then said, in highly derogatory terms, that the dagoes lived on the smell of an oil rag. . . . But we learnt to take the appellation dagoes and not to challenge the superiority of our White Anglo-Saxon, Protestant (or Catholic) tormentors. There were too many of them."<sup>779</sup> This statement was not a once off. In 1934 writing in the third person B.A. Santamaria stated: "No Anglo-Saxon can realise the terrible insult which the word 'Dago' contemptuously used is to an Italian."<sup>780</sup>

Strangely, Santamaria also included the story of Tony Lanassa in his autobiography. The story in *Against the Tide* is as follows: "As for my father, he was loud in his praise of the abilities of the new curate who, he hoped, would cure his closest Italian friend, Tony Lanassa, of his professed Socialism. . . . When Tony finally had a son, his wife insisted that the baby should be baptised which, to the child's father, was the ultimate blasphemy against the sacred tenets of Marxism."<sup>781</sup> Lanassa therefore insisted by stating that the child's name should be Francis Marx. But with Giuseppe Santamaria as Godfather and Lanassa a safe distance away from the baptismal font, the name Francis Mark was placed on the "beleaguered child."<sup>782</sup> There is a similar story found in Giovanni Guareschi's *Don Camillo Omnibus* where the Communist mayor Peppone wished his child be baptised "Lenin Libero Antonio". The priest Don Camillo, eventually baptised the child – after a stand off – "Libero Camillo Lenin" because "when you have a Camillo around such folk as he [Lenin] are quite helpless."<sup>783</sup>

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<sup>778</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>779</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>780</sup> Santamaria, "Italy Changes its Shirts", p.1.

<sup>781</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.7.

<sup>782</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>783</sup> Giovanni Guareschi, *The Don Camillo Omnibus*, (Readers Book Club: London, 1956) pp. 16-19.

In *Against the Tide*, once we get past the first chapter, Santamaria's Italian background is no longer mentioned. The Italian chaplains of the 1930s and 1940s are not mentioned nor is any member of his family. The autobiography made Santamaria's origins quite clear. They were Italian, of an Aeolian background, but like leaving Brunswick for the Eastern suburbs, Santamaria leaves his Italian background behind in the early chapters of *Against the Tide*.

It was in the 1980s that Santamaria began to speak openly about his Italian background. Richard Doig, in his analysis of Santamaria's 'yen for peasantry' (as he calls it), argues that it was "more of a literary creation that defined his antagonistic position in relation to the academic establishment in later years."<sup>784</sup>

In 1983, Santamaria wrote that "marriage took me away from Brunswick to Kew, my whole environment might have changed but changes in environment makes no difference to a man's major loyalties."<sup>785</sup> B.A. Santamaria was of course referring to his football team, not to his Italian background. Santamaria's move away from Brunswick was a moving away from his Italian background and working class upbringing.

In 1987, B.A. Santamaria wrote the biography about his mentor, *Daniel Mannix*. Incongruously, Fr Modotti and the Italian community are not mentioned at all. Even the Archbishop's housekeepers, the Virgona sisters are omitted. The book has a chapter dedicated to Archbishop John Panico whom Santamaria interprets as attacking Mannix's leadership. Santamaria argues that Panico was concerned "with the most important

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<sup>784</sup> Richard Doig, "A New Deal for Australia: The National Catholic Rural Movement and American Agrarianism. 1931-1949. *Rural Society*, p.140.

<sup>785</sup> B.A. Santamaria, "Football typifies the Australian character" (1983) *News Weekly*, March 21 1993, p.23.

question relating to the future direction of the Catholic Church... the racial origin of the episcopate whether that leadership would continue to be predominately Irish and native born Australians.”<sup>786</sup> Santamaria defends Mannix, over Panico’s quite legitimate attempts to change the direction of the Church, arguing that the “Australianisation... was already being achieved...”<sup>787</sup> Yet, Santamaria fails to mention Modotti, who was a victim of Panico in his attempt at the Australisation of the Australian Catholic Church.<sup>788</sup>

With B.A. Santamaria’s claims of his own Italian peasantry background came his outward support for European Christian Democracy; writing in 1985, he states: “From the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century at the same time as the various socialist parties were developing, a powerful and pervasive movement under the generic title ‘Christian Democracy’ spread over the greater part of Europe, based essentially on the personalist, pluralist and regionalist principles associated with Christian social thinking.”<sup>789</sup> Christian Democracy no doubt had its origins in Italy as well as Germany, B.A. Santamaria acknowledged this, but he always referred to the Italian last: “The strongest evidence of the moral and political power of this authentically Catholic movement was the role of the greatest figures in the reconstruction of Europe after the holocaust of World War II... Konrad Adenauer, Alcide de Gasperi...”<sup>790</sup>

So high in praise was B.A. Santamaria of Christian democracy that he poses the question, (a question he could have posed to himself): “...there is deeply embedded in Catholicism, a long tradition of Christian Democracy to which apart from the invaluable contribution of the US in the Marshall Plan, the post-war salvation of Western Europe is almost

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<sup>786</sup> B.A. Santamaria, *Daniel Mannix*, (Melbourne University Press: Melbourne, 1987), p.184.

<sup>787</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>788</sup> A thorough article about this episode is found in - A. Cappello, “Rome or Ireland: The Religious control of the Italian Community”, *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol.23, 2002, pp.59-73.

<sup>789</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “A Catholic Debt to Marxism”, *Social Survey*, July 1985, p.168.

<sup>790</sup> *ibid.* p.169.

exclusively owned. Why then do we not draw from the inspiration of what is both Christian in origin and relatively successful in practice?”<sup>791</sup>

In 1986 B.A. Santamaria granted an interview to Professor Robert Pascoe of Victoria University for the Vaccari Historical Society. The focus of the Vaccari Italian Historical Trust was research into Italian-Australian history, therefore much of the focus of this interview was on B.A. Santamaria’s Italian descent and culture.

The Santamaria found in the Robert Pascoe interview is unlike the Santamaria in other interviews. The content of this interview follows on largely from where the first chapter of *Against the Tide* left off. Here B.A. Santamaria’s background comes to the front and the political working of the Movement slides into the background. Pascoe in this interview separated B.A. Santamaria from the Movement and placed the focus on his Italian background by very well chosen questions that went into the heart of this background.

During this interview we find out that B.A. Santamaria’s first language was Aeolian<sup>792</sup> and although he was Australian he was also “extremely Italian”.<sup>793</sup> His ideas had come “from an Italian peasant background” and the Church “validated and rationalised those ideas.”<sup>794</sup> Yet, when speaking about religion, B.A. Santamaria stated that he “had an Irish view of religion.”<sup>795</sup> Later in an interview on the ABC along with Diamond Jim McClelland of the ALP - an old school friend who had abandoned his belief in God because of his Irish Catholicism - B.A. Santamaria stated that “... the difference between us was that I was brought up in an Italian Catholic family and Italian Catholicism has got

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<sup>791</sup> *ibid.* p.177.

<sup>792</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Interview by Rob Pascoe, op.cit.

<sup>793</sup> *ibid.*

an atmosphere of smoothness and lack of fanaticism....”<sup>796</sup> Nonetheless, B.A.

Santamaria continued down his Italian reminiscence even arguing that his NCRM ideas despite his metropolitan upbringing came naturally to him because of his peasant background.<sup>797</sup> He also strongly rebuked and challenged “derogatory remarks” that claimed that B.A. Santamaria had no Italian links.<sup>798</sup> Interestingly this was the first interview after the war in which Santamaria mentions Fr Modotti.

In an address to De La Salle College in 1986, B.A. Santamaria shared the story of Giulia Borelli – the prima donna of the Marxist terrorist group in Italy. When she was captured, Borelli was already pregnant. In jail she gave birth to twins and there she caused controversy because she had them baptised Catholics. The reason for the baptism, according to Borelli, was that despite her being an unbeliever she wanted her children to be Italian and Italian culture was Catholic. B.A. Santamaria, in using this story, wanted to make an important point: “I simply repeat her story because it is so different from mine, although I, too am by blood an Italian.... We [Bob and his wife] understood that faith and believed it to be true.”<sup>799</sup> Such a contradiction is typical of B.A. Santamaria throughout his life, hence the title of this thesis “To be or not to be an Italian.” B.A. Santamaria’s background was Italian but his attitude was ambivalent and at times unclear.

Despite this ambivalence, B.A. Santamaria remained one of the few Australian social commentators who imported Italian opinion in his social commentary and introduced it into the wider Australian community. The task of hearing an Italian perspective in

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<sup>794</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>795</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>796</sup> B.A. Santamaria, speaking in the interview “Once Were Warriors”, Lateline 1997, transcript in full in *News Weekly*, March 21 1998. p.20.

<sup>797</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Interview by Rob Pascoe, *op.cit.*

<sup>798</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>799</sup> B.A. Santamaria, *Australia at the Crossroads: Reflections of an Outsider*, (Melbourne University Press: Melbourne, 1987) p.235.



Australian affairs has always remained difficult. Desmond O'Grady, for instance, speaking at a conference in 2000 argued that "reporting from Italy has shown me how much Italian life does not get into Australian papers."<sup>800</sup> In the days before the Internet, using Italian sources such as newspapers and journals was original to the Australian audience and would have been presented to the readers as original ideas. This originality has often been attributed to Santamaria. Yet, his clever "cut and paste" method may not have survived the years following his death where everyone, thanks to the Internet, has access to international journals and ideas.

In 1988, B.A. Santamaria had still not embraced multiculturalism, although he expressed an attitude to those who still wished Australia to be peopled by British stock that it was all from a past that was finished. Regrettable or not, Santamaria does not offer his personal opinion. B.A. Santamaria did praise the virtues of British culture especially as coming from "one of Italian blood".<sup>801</sup> But these views he expressed in *News Weekly* while in *AD2000* he argued that the correct understanding of Catholic Action was found in Italy in the example of Dr Luigi Gedda."<sup>802</sup> In 1988, *AD2000* was also taking articles from the Italian journal, *30 days*.

In *AD2000* in 1988, B.A. Santamaria described the division in the Church as a takeover by progressive Catholics calling for reform, as "merely the application of the revolutionary doctrine of the prophet of Italian Communism, Antonio Gramsci, to the conquest of power, not within a State, but within the Church."<sup>803</sup> It was also during this period that he had been reading the *Peasant of Garrone* by Jacques Maritain, who argued in his book: "The subtitle of this book needs no explanation.... A peasant of the Danube –

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<sup>800</sup> Desmond O'Grady, "My Italian Education", *In Search of the Italian Australian into the new Millennium*, (Italian-Australian Institute: Melbourne, 2004) p.524.

<sup>801</sup> B.A. Santamaria, "Multiculturalism: Shadow and Substance", *News Weekly*, November 14 1988, p.16.

or the Garonne – is, as anyone... who puts his foot in his mouth, or who calls a spade a spade. This is what, in all modesty, and not without fearing to be unequal to the task... I would like to attempt.”<sup>804</sup> Santamaria felt a shared belief with Maritain: “It is easy, of course, for trained theologians and Biblical scholars to dismiss the present writer as a theological illiterate whose views are unworthy of consideration.”<sup>805</sup>

In 1990, Santamaria argued that it was his Italian family that was at the centre of his core beliefs: “I think the most important thing about myself is that I was born into an Italian family....”<sup>806</sup> He went on to say: “It was inevitable that their background should become mine. Insofar as there is anything of value in my character it comes from that background.”<sup>807</sup> Santamaria went further and praised his background as being of peasant stock: “I think the other important part of that background was that it was of peasant stock. It’s natural that I should have a high opinion of the peasant virtues – which emphasize individual independence and the family bond – just as I know the peasant vices. It was into that framework that my Catholicism fitted....”<sup>808</sup>

Regarding religion, Santamaria made a distinction: “Italian Catholicism and Irish Catholicism are different. The Irish place a lot of value on regular observance. Many Italians don’t; but are equally Catholic in their attitude.”

In an interview in *The Australian* he went as far as stating: “I think the most important thing about myself is that I was born into an Italian family”.<sup>809</sup> In 1991, in an interview

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<sup>802</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “Mannix and the Laity, After 25 years”, *AD2000*, November 1988, p.5.

<sup>803</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “A Kingdom Divided in Itself”, *AD2000*, April 1988. p.4.

<sup>804</sup> J. Maritain, *The Peasant of Garrone: An Old Layman Questions Himself and the Present time*, (Holt, Rinehart and Winston: New York, 1968), preface.

<sup>805</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “The Essential of the Christian Religion”, *News Weekly*, January 6, 1988, p.16.

<sup>806</sup> “Being a Catholic in the 1990s: James Murray interviews Bob Santamaria”, *AD2000*, June 1990, p.7.

<sup>807</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>808</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>809</sup> “Being a Catholic in 1990s: James Murray Interviews Bob Santamaria”, *AD2000*, June 1990, pp.7-9.

with Marc Florio for his Honour's thesis, B.A. Santamaria stated: "...if I hadn't been brought up a Catholic I probably would have had the same social and political ideas that I've got anyway because of a kind of peasant view of life that I have always had..."<sup>810</sup>

In 1994, after a decade of arguing that his background was an Italian peasant background, Santamaria stated in one interview that despite the advantages of his background he was always in a position of vulnerability.<sup>811</sup> It was a rare insight to what it was like to be of an Italian background. It was to be in a position of vulnerability. The way around this problem was to avoid bringing one's descent and culture into the public arena.

In the 1990s, Santamaria continued to remind his readers that it was his Italian background not Catholicism that was the inspiration for his ideas. He revealed to the lifestyle magazine *Encore* what his favourite picture was: "when I first visited St. Peter's Basilica in Rome in 1971... none moved me so deeply as Michelangelo's *Pieta*..."<sup>812</sup>

In 1995 the author interviewed B.A. Santamaria for a fourth year thesis on the Italian Catholic Community in Melbourne during the years 1919 to 1945. But B.A. Santamaria denied any major involvement in the Italian community.<sup>813</sup> When shown the sources, which demonstrated some close associations of his with the Italian Community during the 1940s, B.A. Santamaria was keen to distance himself. He was far more concerned with trying to find out if historian Gianfranco Cresciani was a member of the Italian

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<sup>810</sup> Marc Florio, "The Social Teachings/Doctrines of B.A. Santamaria.", Hons. Bachelor of Arts, La Trobe University, Melbourne 1991, p.5.

<sup>811</sup> Bob Santamaria and Alan Carlson, ABC, Geraldine Doogue, "Life Matters July 8 1994", typed transcript.

<sup>812</sup> B.A. Santamaria, "My Favourite Picture", *Encore*, March 30 1997, p.15.

<sup>813</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview with the author for 4<sup>th</sup> year thesis - A. S. Cappello, "Aspects of Italian Catholic Life in Melbourne with special references to the political convictions of its Chaplain's, 1919 to 1945" Yarra Theological Union, Melbourne, 1995.

Communist Party.<sup>814</sup> Furthermore, any talk of fascism just led to a referral to a careful reading of historian, Paul Johnson.

As more material came to light about B.A. Santamaria's strong Italian connections, arrangements were made to meet him for my Masters thesis but he was overcome by illness and a follow up interview was never conducted.

In his final years Santamaria continued to give mixed messages about his Italian descent and culture. In an interview with Cameron Forbes, B.A. Santamaria stated: "Italians were part of the Irish thing. We had our own feast days – Our Lady of this and Our Lady of that – but it was really part of an Irish tribal structure in which I felt very much at home..."<sup>815</sup> While in another interview he recalled, "It was the editor of the Sydney Morning Herald who said that and he said why don't you change your name? I said you can go to hell!"<sup>816</sup>

In 1997, Santamaria engaged in an interview with Robin Hughes as a part of Australian Biography. It is an intensive and long interview that brings out a very personal Santamaria. Santamaria begins by telling Hughes about his family and his upbringing: "I used to live near the Brunswick Town Hall. Fifty yards to the north of Brunswick Town Hall was St. Ambrose's Church. I used to go to Mass there of a Sunday. Less than fifty yards behind was the school, where I had to go every day, and about a mile to the south was the Carlton football ground, and I went every Saturday, and those were the parameters of my life."<sup>817</sup>

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<sup>814</sup> B.A. Santamaria – notes to the author regarding his fourth year thesis, 1995, (ACA).

<sup>815</sup> Cameron Forbes, "The End of the War" *The Australian Magazine*, September 23-24 1995, p.15.

Santamaria recalled in this interview that his first language was Aeolian and that his land settlement ideas went back to his Italian background as he “was broadly familiar with how those islanders lived, and I was always taken by it.”<sup>818</sup> Santamaria also stated that his Catholicism went with his Italianness and that he felt “aesthetically an Italian...but it has nothing whatsoever to do with your patriotism” which to Santamaria was that he was an Australian and that was it.<sup>819</sup> What he meant by being an Australian was never explored. However, as he was publishing pamphlets at the same time by people like John Stone who made it quite clear that being an Australian was being of British stock, one does have the tendency to be a little cynical about Santamaria’s claims of being an Australian.

As for being an Italian, Santamaria saw it “not so much as a country as an emotion” and at the end of the day he was more of an Italian from the North, rather than the South:

My parents come from the south, and there are some beauties in the south that you really couldn't even dream about. But the cities of the Lombardy Plain are superb. And Verona is really out of this world. But even ... there's a city like Mantua in which Dante was born, and which I discovered that Virgil lived a lot of his life. It's very hard for me to describe, but when I saw that statue of Virgil, and three lines of the *Aeneid* that I hadn't read since my school days underneath, I just felt this is where I really belong.<sup>820</sup>

Santamaria’s notion of belonging to the North rather than to the South is not uncommon for second-generation Italians. Maria Laurino, in her paradoxical book *Were you Always An Italian*, shares a similar thought: “I had embraced the Italy of the North, a world away from my roots, blessed by an abundance of natural beauty and fertile land that made a mockery of the useless Southern

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<sup>816</sup> “Once were Warriors”, Lateline interview ABC, 1997 with B.A. Santamaria, Jim McClelland and Maxine McKew. reproduced in Full: *News Weekly*, March 2 1998, p.20.

<sup>817</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Interview with Robin Hughes, op.cit.

<sup>818</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>819</sup> *ibid*

<sup>820</sup> *ibid.*

terrain.”<sup>821</sup> The North of Italy was far more acceptable to the average Australian than the South. Santamaria was certainly aware of such a difference in attitude. But it also reflected on how Santamaria saw Italy no longer as the place of identity but rather a space of his identity.

What does all this say about B.A. Santamaria’s identity? What did B.A. Santamaria perceive subjectively about his identity and what is exactly and objectively an Italian, an Italian Australian or an Australian with an Italian descent and culture?

What we can propose, looking through the writings of Santamaria, is that his position of identity and culture underwent significant shifts. These shifts mirrored the shifts in Australian culture, which had moved away from assimilation to integration and to the point where “there may be too much variety to speak sensibly of national character.”<sup>822</sup> Therefore, rather than having a shift in Santamaria’s notion of his identity he was simply moving with the times. Such a pattern of behaviour is not uncommon in second-generation Italian-Australians<sup>823</sup> when we compare this with the modern concepts of identity and identity studies.

This shifting of identity is consistent with the concept of hybridity. According to John Germor and Marilyn Poole in *Public Sociology: an Introduction to Australian Society*, hybridity “assumes a free-floating action in the case of the person”, who for this research is B.A. Santamaria who “voluntarily chooses between identities and positions.”<sup>824</sup> This was certainly the case with B.A. Santamaria but how voluntary was it. Chapter Seven will

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<sup>821</sup> Laurino. *op.cit.* p.94.

<sup>822</sup> Chandran Kukathas “Multiculturalism and the idea of an Australian identity” in *Multicultural Citizens: The Philosophy and Politics of Identity*, Edited Chandran Kukathas (CIS: St Leonards, 1993) p.151.

<sup>823</sup> This is covered very well in the thesis – “Toward a Revised Portrait of Young Second-generation Italian-Australian Women: An Exploration of Lifestyle Choices”; Franca Foti, University of South Australia School of Social Work and Social Policy, University of South Australia, School of Social Work and Social Policy Published by University of South Australia, 2000.

<sup>824</sup> J. Germor & M. Poole, *Public Sociology: An Introduction to Australian Society*, (Allen and Unwin: St Leonards, 2006) p.204.

explore the racial climate in which Santamaria had to operate which would indicate that at times Santamaria had no choice but to move with the times when it came to his Italian background. Yet, if you compare this attitude with Santamaria's uncompromising and unshifting position of Catholicism we find no free-floating agent moving with the times.

The question of identity was for Santamaria early on in his life situated in the *domus*, a place, a location in Brunswick, which, was as much as being Catholic, Irish as well as being a part of the Italian community. The major link to Santamaria's Italian culture at the *domus* stage was the language as argued by Angelika Bammer: "One of the primary places where the issues of national culture and family language came together is the question of language... the family history will be told, but in what language."<sup>825</sup>

This language was less Italian and more regional, or local, the Aeolian language of the Aeolian Islands.

Santamaria made the language distinction clear in an interview: "The first language I ever spoke was the Aeolian dialect, which is a mixture of Italian, Spanish, a bit of French and a bit of Arab, I think, and my parents used to speak that."<sup>826</sup> The regional nature of his mother's language was a concept he clearly understood by B.A. Santamaria and with an interview with the author Santamaria recalled a time when Jehovah Witnesses knocked on his door to preach their Gospel. Of course, as soon as it was discovered that the name of the house was Santamaria the next visit of Jehovah Witnesses to the Santamaria household was done by Italians. When this visit took place Santamaria recalled that they were from the North of Italy, Veneti and when an attempt in conversation took place in

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<sup>825</sup> Angelika Bammer, "Mother Tongues and Other Strangers: Writing 'Family' across Cultural Divides" in *Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question*, ed. by Angelika Bammer (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1994) p.96.

<sup>826</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Interview with Robin Hughes, op.cit.

their Italian dialects, Santamaria's with his Aeolian dialect, and the Veneti with theirs, either party soon gave up because neither party understood each other.

Another factor in Santamaria's notion of identity was his understanding of Italy as a space rather than a place. Space was no longer an area with boundaries but an imagined articulated movement in networks and understanding. Not a physical place or a fixed place.<sup>827</sup> The birthplace of his parents became no longer a fixed place with borders but an imagined space; Santamaria articulated this in 1989 interview: "Last night I saw a film. We had some visitors and we showed them this film. I don't think any of them liked as much as I did, but I've seen it umpteen times. It's called *Avanti* and it's got Jack Lemmon in it. And I can't tell you the plot, it doesn't matter. But one of the characters says, 'Italy is not so much a country as an emotion'. That's what I feel about it."<sup>828</sup>

Therefore having an identity closely aligned with space rather than place or a place with no fixed borders Santamaria's identity was flexible, multiple and changing.<sup>829</sup>

And in Santamaria's life this identity shifted when he moved to the East of Melbourne. This identity was trans-national, it went beyond borders. It was combined with the Irish Christian Brothers in their rigid Catholicism, Melbourne University and the life of the Movement. Santamaria's Italian identity was imagined, never fixed and more localised within the language and influence by his Aeolian parents the Aeolian language and their social networks in Australia.

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<sup>827</sup> Stuart Hall "Cultural Identity and Diaspora" in *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, edited by Jonathan Rutherford (Lawrence and Wishart: London, 1990) p.225.

<sup>828</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Interview with Robin Hughes, op.cit.



## CONCLUSION

Taking the line from Graham Greene, that an autobiography is a sort of life, it can be concluded that when writing about his background, Santamaria has been “out of sorts”. He was a “sort of” Italian- Australian, although he never once penned that term. He was an Australian of Italian blood, of Italian parents, of Italian heritage; “sort of” Italian.

In the vast selection of writings by B.A. Santamaria, writings related to his Italian culture are only a very small part. His Italian background was not his biggest selling point in his writings. His writings show us that this was kept well hidden.

The Santamaria story fits best into the theory of “positionality” and “shifting identities”, where there are a number of identities which make up the self over a period of time. Positionality and the shifting identities allowed Santamaria to be defined, not as a fixed identity in relation to how he saw his Italian background but varying according to his location and his shifting networks of relationships.<sup>830</sup> Therefore the Santamaria of Brunswick had a different attitude to his Italian background to the Santamaria of Kew or Balwyn. The shifting positions coincide with the shifting positions of perceptions towards Italian-Australians in the wider Australian community. As Italians became more tolerated and accepted into the Australian mainstream so too did Santamaria recognize this and become more open about his background.

Another feature of his shifting position is what Patrick Morgan, writing in *Quadrant* in 1987, calls “presentism” in which Santamaria had the “habit of claiming that his position

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<sup>829</sup> Aneta Pavlenko and Adrian Blackledge, *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Context* (Multilingual Matters: Clevedon, 2004) p.193.

today is one that he always held.”<sup>831</sup> Morgan then uses an example such as the claim that the Movement sustained the DLP for two decades. Morgan finds this “breathtaking”, as Santamaria had at another time disclaimed any maintaining of the DLP by the NCC. This chapter has shown that this “breathtaking” form of “presentism” is typical of Santamaria, especially when it relates to his culture. Another example found in this thesis is the answer to the question. What type of migrants did Santamaria want to bring out to Australia with the Land Settlement schemes? In the 1960s Santamaria would have answered (and in fact did answer) Germans, Dutch and Southern Europeans, while in the 1990s Santamaria answered “Italians”.

There is no doubt that positionality and presentism were held together with one important underlying factor, social exclusion. Santamaria certainly experienced social exclusion and in his writing in 1934, Santamaria recalled that “No Anglo-Saxon can realize the terrible insult which the word ‘Dago’, contemptuously used, and is to any Italian... They are usually silent, feeling that as they themselves are despised...”<sup>832</sup> This silence – a reaction to racism – may have been the driving factor for Santamaria to say very little of his Italian background during those turbulent years of the split.

Finally, to Santamaria Italy was a space with no fixed boundaries and his identification as an Italian was with this space rather than the place - fixed nation-state of Italy.

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<sup>830</sup> Kathleen St Louis and A. Calabrese Barton, “Tales from the Science Education Crypt: A Critical Reflection of Positionality, Subjectivity and Reflectivity in Research.” *Forum Qualitative Social Research*, Vol.3. No.3. September 2002, online resource.

<sup>831</sup> Patrick Morgan, “Mr Santamaria and the Wolf”, *Quadrant*, October 1987, p.15.

<sup>832</sup> Santamaria, “Italy Changes Its Shirts”, p.5.

## CHAPTER 7:

### THE ITALIAN PROBLEM

This chapter will aim to survey the perceptions of Italians in Australia by the wider Australian population as well as looking into the life of Santamaria within such perceptions and how it reflected on his work. This chapter is in two parts, which essentially researches the same topic, which is social exclusion. The first part will explore a more general history of social exclusion towards Italian migrants in Australia. The history is in chorological order. The second part of the chapter will focus on Santamaria and how as someone of an Italian background he was treated and affected by social exclusion. Once again this is in a chronological order.

In 1987 Santamaria appropriately entitled his book *Australia at the Crossroads: Reflections of an Outsider*. The title suggested that B.A. Santamaria had the insecurity of being an outsider. It is an important psychological appreciation of B.A. Santamaria, which is not uncommon in the Italian-Australian experience. It was part and parcel of the problem of being from an Italian background. Italians in Australia have had a history of social exclusion. The Santamaria story is one of several common experiences. Take, for example, the following story found in the biography of Sir Raphael Cilento. Raphael Cilento was the former Director-General of Health and Medical Services in Queensland. Raphael Cilento was a third-generation Italian-Australian, yet it nevertheless did not make him immune from the problem of social exclusion. The story is as follows:

Jeez! What sort of a flaming monicker is that?" asked the delivery boy. He stood looking from me to the crate he's unloaded with its label marked CILENTO. "Is that your name, kid?" I nodded. His

offsider explained, “His old man’s in the Guv’ment –they’re dagoes or sumpin, George”. “Dagoes, Charl,” said George, “ain’t dagoes black?” I was seven years old and stood in awe of my handsome peremptory father and it was some time before I plucked up courage to ask him how people came to be dagoes...<sup>833</sup>

According to Cilento’s biographer Fedora Gould Fisher, when Cilento was seventy and writing his memoirs “this incident stood out so clearly in the landscape of his life that he used it to introduce, as if subconsciously, a dark side of his life from childhood, the insecurity of being an outsider. Conversely, pride in his ancient Italian name was to be the lodestar of his life’s ambition.”<sup>834</sup>

Santamaria, as I will demonstrate, shared a common experience with Cilento. Like Cilento, Santamaria found social exclusion a common problem in his dealings as a social commentator and as a political thinker.

When looking at the protestant Anglo-Saxon attitudes towards Italians we need to go back to the time of the English reformation where Italian devils became an essential part of the image making of Italy: “the Italian devils possess that mixture of qualities which enable us to recognize them as both descendants of Lucifer and precursors of the Godfather....”<sup>835</sup>

The Southern Italian suffered a more negative perception than the Northern Italian. The Southern Italian was not only seen as primitive but unworthy of the title *cristiano* – the Italian word for person, which literally translates to Christian. Although a much later source, Carlo Levi’s wartime memoir writes about this notion of inferiority of the Southern Italian:

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<sup>833</sup> Fedora Gould Fisher, *Raphael Cilento: A Biography* (UQP: St.Lucia, 1994), p.1.

<sup>834</sup> *ibid.*

“We’re not Christian,” they say. “Christ stopped short of here, at Eboli.” Christian in their way of speaking means human beings, and this almost proverbial phrase that I have so often heard them repeat may be no more than the expression of a hopeless feeling of inferiority.<sup>836</sup>

Before Italians came to Australia, they were going to the United States, migrating as early as 1848, and during 1890 to 1900, over half a million Italians migrated to the United States. Such a mass movement of people created panic and fear among Americans. In 1909 Israel Zangwill wrote the play entitled *The Melting Pot*. This play was to create the symbolic mythology for millions of migrants coming to America. The melting pot promoted Anglo-conformity. It argued that the new immigrants would melt into a pre-existing culture, which was Anglo-Saxon. Of course with this was the presumption that the culture of the new arrivals was inferior to that of the pre-existing culture.<sup>837</sup>

It was a post-war study that was to fundamentally and negatively brand Italians. This was Edward Banfield’s study *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*, undertaken in 1958 with his wife in a town in Southern Italy where he spent nine months. In this study Banfield went on to argue that the Italian peasants were amoral familists and unable to serve anyone outside the immediate family: “maximize the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear family...”<sup>838</sup> Banfield’s research still remains the best known on the Southern Italian family, even if it was a negative study the research for which was also used to argue that Italian-Americans were also amoral familists. The main criticism of Banfield’s research came in the way it was conducted and that it is “the cause of these characteristics of the social system, but they that are the basis of the ethos.”<sup>839</sup>

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<sup>835</sup> John Navone, “Italian Devils of Anglo-Saxon Literature”, *Twentieth Century*. Vol.29, Autumn 1974, p.247.

<sup>836</sup> Levi, *op.cit.* p.11.

<sup>837</sup> Crispino, *op.cit.* p.5.

<sup>838</sup> Banfield, *op.cit.* p.85.

Banfield's study has been challenged and in many ways dismissed. Filippo Sabetti of McGill University, Canada challenged his study by arguing that: "Banfield's amoral familism about the people of Montegrano is hardly a neutral concept. Banfield ignored the presence of horizontal bonds of reciprocity, trust, solidarity and ad hoc mutual aid and exchanges of services that went beyond relationships with one's own kin, which were and remain very much part of the local way of life .... Documents in the provincial state and diocesan archives point to long enduring local ventures as civic assets. These include Catholic confraternities and lay mutual aid societies, socialist rural co-operatives and other long term joint community efforts that successfully avoided for much its traceable history the tragedy of the commons in the joint use of the communal woodland as fuel for fire."<sup>840</sup>

According to Maria Laurino, writing in her book *Were You Always an Italian*, "By now, the concept of amoral familism has become so ingrained in the public consciousness, that some people don't recognize its blatant racism. For generations, Italian-Americans have had to combat negative images about 'family', which at worst is a euphemism for the Mafia, but amoral families may be the more dangerous stereotype because it touches every member of the ethnic group."<sup>841</sup>

In more recent times, the American experience has brought a more sinister image of the Italian migrant – that of the Godfather: "Mario Puzo's vastly successful novel *The Godfather* was even more successful, really. The Godfather seems to have held up an image of Italian American life that has obliterated the reality."<sup>842</sup>

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<sup>839</sup> S.F. Silverman, "Agricultural Organisation: Social Structure and Values in Italy: Amoral Familism Reconsidered", *American Anthropologist*, 1968, p.3.

<sup>840</sup> Filippo Sabetti, "Democracy and Civic Culture", unpublished paper, 2004.

<sup>841</sup> Laurino, *op.cit.* p.40.

<sup>842</sup> A. Kenneth Ciongoli and Jap Parini, *Beyond the Godfather: Italian American writer on the real Italian American experience* (UPNE: London, 1998), p.xiii.

The American experience has shown that Italian migrants, particularly from the South, suffered social exclusion and as argued by Helen Barolini in her essay “Buried Alive by Language”: “I think that Italian Americans are too easily used as objects of ridicule and scorn. It has been said that anti-Catholicism is the prejudice of choice of the liberal intellectual. That could be expanded to include Italian Americans....”<sup>843</sup>

Sadly, the Australian experience has largely followed the same path as the American Experience.

Italians in Australia like Italians in the United States right until the embrace of multiculturalism and even beyond have had to endure social exclusion. Known as the “olive peril”, the Italians migrants were seen as a threat to Australia’s culture.<sup>844</sup> The Australian culture was predominately Anglo-Saxon, Protestant and seen as deeply connected to the mother country, Great Britain.

From 1901 to 1947 the Italian population of Australia rose from 6000 in 1901 to over 33000 in 1947. After Australian Federation in 1901, many of the Italian migrants were poor and keen to escape poverty by coming to Australia and, as argues Cresciani: “In Australia they found themselves estranged from the Australian community and from the Italian establishment....”<sup>845</sup>

Before the war, Italians were seen as cheap labor and, as Helen Andreoni found in her research, from early on there was a northern/southern Italian divide with the poor

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<sup>843</sup> Helen Barolini, “Buried Alive by Language” *Don’t Tell Mama: The Penguin Book of Italian-American Writing*, (Penguin, New York, 2002) p.37.

<sup>844</sup> Helen Andreoni, “Olive or White: The Colour of Italians in Australia”, *Sojourners and Strangers*, (UQP: St. Lucia, 2003), p.85.

<sup>845</sup> G. Cresciani, *The Italians in Australia* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2003), p.55.

southerner receiving all the bad press. Andreoni points out that early on the Italians were seen as partly white and they were referred to as the “Dago Menace”.<sup>846</sup>

Tensions towards the Italians increased, in particular in North Queensland where the Italian migrants quickly adapted to the hard working conditions as noted by William Douglass’s in his research on Ingham: “... criticism of Italians was two-pronged, contending that through sheer numbers they might ultimately swamp the British population, and through aggressive property acquisitions eventually come to dominate the production of Australian sugar on the other.”<sup>847</sup> The tensions reached their climax in 1925 when the Queensland government set a Royal Commission to look at the Italian problem in North Queensland. The Commission became known as the Ferry Commission.

The Ferry Commission found that the “Northern Italian” was a “desirable class of immigrant”, but as the report states the “majority of the new arrivals in Queensland appear to be from the South, many of them being Sicilians”. These were less desirable and less able to be assimilated.<sup>848</sup>

Sicilians suffered the worst racism, even Archbishop Duhig and the Italian Consular officials in North Queensland admitted that the worst of the Italian migrants came from Sicily.<sup>849</sup> This was despite the fact that the majority of Sicilians “came from the eastern and northern part of Sicily where the mafia supposedly did not operate.”<sup>850</sup> To the

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<sup>846</sup> Andreoni, *op.cit.* p.84.

<sup>847</sup> Douglass, *op.cit.* p.94.

<sup>848</sup> Commissioner T.A. Ferry, “Report on Alien Immigration in Northern Queensland”, reproduced in *Sources of Australian Immigration History 1901-1945*, edited John Lock and J. Templeton, (History Department, Melbourne University Press: Melbourne, 1988), p.139.

<sup>849</sup> Lyn Henderson, “The Truth in Stereotype? Italians and Criminality in North Queensland between the Wars, *Journal of Australian Studies*, Number 55, June 1995, p.37.

<sup>850</sup> *ibid.*



Australian Government, before the Second World War Italians were the least preferred migrants. Worse than the Italian migrant was the Southern Italian migrant.

When the *Re D'Italia* arrived in Melbourne, in 1927, Roland Browne, Inspector for the Attorney-General's department, sent Mr. Neale of his department to report on migrants on board, about which he submitted: "The migrants on this vessel were of a most undesirable type, as far as physique, structure and general appearance go. They were most undersized, dark Southern Italians, and one could safely say, the worst type of Southern Italian."<sup>851</sup>

Ten years later, alarm bells began to sound within the Government department concerning how many of the Italian migrants were actually Southern Italian migrants.<sup>852</sup> The Department of Interior in Canberra summoned Inspector R.F.B. Wake who in his report to the department showed that there were just as many Southern Italians as there were Northern Italians.<sup>853</sup>

## ITALY ENTERS THE WAR

With Italy's entry in the war in June 1940 things got worse for the Italian migrants. Italians now became enemy aliens. For anyone remotely associated with anything or anyone Italian was now isolated and completely discredited. The Australian government took the threat of a "fifth column" literally and interned Italian migrants. In Queensland in particular, about 25% of people of an Italian background were interned compared to

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<sup>851</sup> Mr. Neale to Mr McLaren, Home and Territories Department, Canberra, December 6 1927, A.A., A367, C3075AB.

<sup>852</sup> A.R. Peters, Secretary Department of the Interior to Director, Commonwealth Investigation Bureau, October 5, 1937, A.A., A367, C3075AB.

just three percent in Victoria.<sup>854</sup> According to Donald Dignan Italy's entry in the War gave justification for the racial and bigoted elements of Australian Society to have their say about Italians in Australia.<sup>855</sup> According to Al Grassby, once ALP Immigration minister, "The anti-Southern European feeling was maintained through the 1920s and the 1930s and received an impetus when Benito Mussolini entered World War Two on the side of Nazi Germany."<sup>856</sup>

The case wasn't helped by grand speeches by Prime Minister Robert Menzies following Italy's declaration of war: "I have never really believed in my heart that British people need to sustain themselves on a diet of hate, but if I ever felt disposed to stand up and sing a hymn of hate it is to-day. The German people, courageous and well organised as they are, unscrupulous as they have been, and are in their outlook on the rights of other people, have never, I believe, sunk to quite the depth to which Italy has sunk to-day."<sup>857</sup>

The Government justified the internments on grounds of National Security and the notion of a fifth column. In his autobiography Claudio Alcorso speaks about the fifth column, Alcorso recalls:

The two suitcases and the incriminating books were put on show in a "Fifth Column Exhibition" staged in Sydney a few months later. It was a strange exercise in war propaganda, difficult to understand then or now. It had been one of Franco's generals, Emilio Mola Vidal, who had coined the term during the Spanish Civil War, when he boasted that in addition to the four columns of soldiers marching towards Madrid, he had a fifth column already inside the capital, made up of secret supporters of Franco. The conventional term had been that of traitor, but the new designation, which captured the imagination of the world, extended the concept and acquired a

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<sup>853</sup> R.F.B. Wake to Secretary Department of the Interior, October 13 1937, *ibid.*

<sup>854</sup> C. Elkner, "The Internment of Italian-Australians: A Perspective from Melbourne" in *Enemy Aliens: The Internment of Italian Migrants in Australia during the Second World War* (Connor Court Publishing: Bacchus Marsh, 2005), p.4.

<sup>855</sup> D. Dignan, "The Internment of Italians in Queensland", in *War, Internment and Mass Migration*, (Gruppo Editoriale Internazionale: Rome, 1992) p.61.

<sup>856</sup> Al Grassby, *The Tyranny of Prejudice*, (A.E. Press: Melbourne, 1984), p.23.

<sup>857</sup> *The Argus*, June 12 1940, p.5.

particular significance in a civil war where friends or enemies could not be recognized by language or by appearance.<sup>858</sup>

Prior to Italy entering the war some newspapers agitated fears of a fifth column. In Melbourne the two most infamous for this were the *Melbourne Truth* and *Smith's Weekly*. In May 1940, for instance, the writers of the *Melbourne Truth* called on all citizens to identify Italians who were potential fifth columnists. "The danger and menace is here" argued the *Melbourne Truth*.<sup>859</sup>

The majority of Australians supported the internments. The Australian Labor Party, in fact, was more strongly opposed against the Italians than the conservative Government of Menzies. Labor Party branches across Australia supported and passed resolutions calling on the Menzies Government to intern all Italians, whether naturalized or not. To these stalwarts of the Australian Labor Party, Italians were potential fifth columnists.<sup>860</sup>

The Government, however, did resist calls to have all Italians interned. This angered many in the community like the Shire President of Imlay Mr. H. Wiles who in a letter to the Minister requested information on what action was the Government taking in respect "... to those greasy dagoes in Queensland."<sup>861</sup> Even the Housewives Association of New South Wales carried a resolution arguing about the dangers of a fifth column and that all enemy aliens be interned.<sup>862</sup>

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<sup>858</sup> Claudio Alcorso, *The Wind You Say*, (Angus and Robertson: Pymble, 1993), p.8.

<sup>859</sup> *Melbourne Truth*, June 1940, p.10.

<sup>860</sup> Pat Mitchell, Secretary of the Five Dock Branch, Australian Labor Party to Hon. F.M. Forde, February 23 1943, A.A., MP508/1, 115, 703, 516. This is one example of a file that contained numerous submissions and resolutions sent to the Government calling on the internment of all Italians in Australia.

<sup>861</sup> H. Wiles, Shire President, Imlay Shire Council to Mr J. Perkins, Canberra, March 16 1942, A.A., MP508/1, 115/703/561.

<sup>862</sup> Eleanor Glencross, Chairman of Directors, Letter to Rt. Hon. R.G. Menzies, July 2 1940, A.A., MP508/1, 115/703/62.

Claudio Alcorso, was one such internee who strongly and ideologically opposed fascism. In fact, Alcorso had escaped Italian fascism to Australia after the Italian government had introduced its racial laws, which targeted Jews and other ethnic minorities. Alcorso came to interpret the internments as nothing less than a racist policy by the Australian government where distinctions between Italians and Anglo-Saxons were like “expressions echoing those of Hitler for his Herrenfolk, adjectives similar to those used by Goebbels against Jews and Gypsies...”<sup>863</sup>

During the height of the war, Fr Modotti took the initiative of publishing a guide for the Italian migrants in the hope that instances of racism could be avoided. The advice was simple. On trams for example “don’t speak loudly, and don’t swear; it’s un-Australian.”<sup>864</sup>

Security heads during the war, Robert B. Wake and his Queensland counterpart John Clement McFarlane, were no friends of the Italian community and the two arguably were responsible for the unnecessary detention of many Italians in internment. Both used “distorted translations”<sup>865</sup> of letters which resulted in one case where a 59-year-old was re-interned or placing a spy on a seven year old child.<sup>866</sup> These security heads were certainly over zealous. Take the case of Robert Wake: in the biography of Labor leader Doc Evatt, who was a friend of Wake, there is an interesting summary of Wake’s theory of “guilty by association.” The theory argued that if person “A” was associated with person “B” and person “B” was believed to hold suspect views then it could be assumed that person “A” shared those views.<sup>867</sup> The book also explains Wake’s later paranoid

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<sup>863</sup> Alcorso, *op.cit.* p.168.

<sup>864</sup> Ugo Modotti, *Piccola Guida Per Gli Italiani in Australia*, (Advocate Press: Melbourne, 1944), p.16.

<sup>865</sup> Dignan, *op.cit.* p.65.

<sup>866</sup> Censor’s Recommendations on the letter by Miss Joyce Bianchi to F. M. Bianchi, July 11 1943, A.A., V/16878/S.

<sup>867</sup> K. Buckley, B. Dale and W. Reynolds, *Doc Evatt: Patriot, Internationalist, Fighter and Scholar*, (Longman Cheshire: Melbourne, 1994), p.387.

views in which the Vatican, the United States and ASIO were in some way connected in a conspiracy against Australia.<sup>868</sup> Wake then held dubious views on Catholics taking over the Labor party, views that he shared with Labor leader H.V. Evatt.

When Italy surrendered in 1943, not much had changed in the eyes of the Australian authorities. Claudio Alcorso as late as May 1945 petitioned the government against the enemy alien label: “It is quite obvious that the event of this war, and the attitude of the Italian people makes the classification of all Italians as enemy aliens not only obsolete but paradoxical.”<sup>869</sup>

## POST WAR ATTITUDES “IMMIGRATION YES – BUT NOT ITALIANS

In August 1945, the Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell delivered his Government’s immigration policy. Here the migrants were to be British. The door was still, however, open to “people from the various dominions, the United States of America, and from European Continental countries who are sound in health and who will not become a charge on the community.”<sup>870</sup> The Federal Executive of the Returned Sailors and Airmen’s Imperial League, on the other hand, passed at their executive meeting that “in any scheme of immigration, care be taken to prevent the congregation in community settlements of people whose National ideals and language differ from those of the British Commonwealth.”<sup>871</sup>

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<sup>868</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>869</sup> Claudio Alcorso to Hon. J.B. Chifley, May 16 1945, A.A., A443, 1952/15/6516.

<sup>870</sup> A.A. Calwell - Immigration – Government Policy. House of Representatives, August 2 1945. A.A., A9816, 1943/4278.

<sup>871</sup> General Secretary, RSSAILA to Rt. Hon. J.S. Chifley, July 2 1946, A.A., A461, H439/1/2.

Australia was still seen as a part of the British Empire. Its culture was still British and the post war Australian Prime Minister from 1949-1966, Robert Menzies, looked upon Australia as "... a small white population, isolated from home", home being Great Britain. Menzies saw that being British meant "being part of something like a human body, alive and throbbing; a body of which Great Britain was the centre or heart, and Australia a part, if only an extremity."<sup>872</sup>

It was in this context, with Italy still seen as a former enemy to the Commonwealth, that attitudes in Australia were generally opposed to widespread Italian emigration to Australia. In 1949, for example, two professors questioned Melbournians on their attitudes towards immigration based on ethnic groups. The categories were: 'Try to get to Australia, Allow them to come to Australia, Let only a few in or, Keep them out. The survey found that Chinese Immigration was more favored than Italian immigration<sup>873</sup> with only 4% wanting Italians, while 38% wanted them out. About 23% argued to allow them in, while 35% only wanted a few.<sup>874</sup>

Despite societal expectations Southern European migrants including Italians were finding their way to Australia through the Australian immigration program. The Australian Catholic Bishop's Conference was uneasy about the influx of Southern European migrants. In its 1957 Statement *Australia's Bold Adventure* it argued: "we are in warm sympathy with the desire to preserve an equitable balance in our population growth by the promotion of a large influx of Britons, Irish and Scots, upon whose cultures and traditions the Australian Commonwealth developed in this portion of the

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<sup>872</sup> J.V. D'Cruz, "The Foreign Policy of Robert Gordon Menzies 1939-1941", *20th Century*, Vol.26, June 1971, p.327.

<sup>873</sup> Rivett, *op.cit.* p.118.

<sup>874</sup> *ibid.* p.117.

globe.”<sup>875</sup> Santamaria, who had very little input into its content, did not draft this Statement of the Bishops.<sup>876</sup> Earlier in 1944 the *Advocate* had strongly argued for British and Northern European migrants as they fit much better into the Australian way of life.<sup>877</sup>

During the 1950s, according to Perth historian Richard Bosworth, “the fundamental source expressing the world view of 1950s Australia remains J.P. O’Grady’s (Nino Culotta) Novel, *They’re a Weirid Mob*.”<sup>878</sup> Nino Culotta was no Italian speaking in the first person. In fact, the name Culotta was a play on the Italian word for rear-end. His books under the pen name of Nino Culotta were quite popular and later the book *They’re a Weirid Mob* became a film. The author was John O’Grady, a qualified pharmacist born in 1901 who spent many years in the army before working in Samoa where he wrote his best-selling book *They’re a Weirid Mob*. The thrust of the character of Nino Culotta could be summed up by the following paragraph in the second last page of the book: “There are far too many New Australians in this country who still are mentally living in their homelands, who mix with people of their own nationality, and try to retain their own language and customs. Who even try to persuade Australians to adopt their customs and manners. Cut it out. There is no better way of life in the world than that of the Australian.”<sup>879</sup> *News Weekly*’s editor Ted Madden found O’Grady’s work “fantastic” and even reviewed his other less famous work.<sup>880</sup>

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<sup>875</sup> “Australia’s Bold Adventure: Pastoral Statement on Immigration by the Catholic Bishops of Australia, 1957”, reproduced in full in Hogan, *op.cit.* p.191.

<sup>876</sup> *ibid.* p.186.

<sup>877</sup> *Advocate*, February 2 1944, p.14.

<sup>878</sup> J. Wilton & R. Bosworth, *Old Worlds and New Australians: The Post War Migrant Experience* (Penguin: Ringwood, 1984) p.24.

<sup>879</sup> John O’Grady, (Nino Culotta), *They’re a Weirid Mob*, (Lansdowne Press: Sydney 1957), p.204.

<sup>880</sup> E.S.M. (Ted Madden) “With O’Grady on the Barrier Reef”, *News Weekly*, September 4 1968, p.11.

In the 1960s, the social exclusion of Italians came in the form of humour as argued by Helen Andreoni: “Even the most racist of remarks... have been presented under the guise of humour.... It continued in the 1950s under a new guise but maintained southern Italians as the target group... Take for example... in the sixties the Italian joke book compiled and edited by Tommy Boccafucci, a pseudonym which again depends on an English pronunciation to achieve its offensive intent.”<sup>881</sup>

Helen Andreoni’s example of humour to present a negative image of Italian migrants is a form of stereotyping. Stereotypes are pictures in the heads of individuals looking out into their social worlds. They are oversimplified conceptions of people and are at the best of times based on minimal or limited knowledge of the groups they are stereotyping.<sup>882</sup> The Italian experience in Australia, and also in the United States, has been the stereotyping of them as fascists, (Mussolini type caricatures) to the more recent sinister image of them as being in the mafia. B.A. Santamaria has had to endure both stereotypes.

From the 1960s and into the more tolerant 1970s a more alarming stereotype emerged of the Italian migrant. An unfortunate perception of the Italian community is that given by the image and notion of the Godfather. The image no doubt has its origins in Hollywood as argued by Italian American writer Maria Laurino: “as an Italian-American whose only knowledge of the mob is through film.”<sup>883</sup>

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<sup>881</sup> Andreoni, *op.cit.* p.89.

<sup>882</sup> C. Neil Macrae, C. Stangor and Miles Hewstone, *Stereotypes and Stereotyping*, (Guilford Press: London, 1996) p.11.

<sup>883</sup> Laurino, *op.cit.* p.139.



Richard Gambino in his essay entitled “The Crisis of Italian-American Identity” argues that in the US, Italians are the “last ethnic group America can comfortably mock.”<sup>884</sup>

One way of mocking has been through the Godfather, which serves the dominant myth that “Italian American culture is in its essence criminal and that Italian American upward mobility in America was achieved through crime....”<sup>885</sup>

In Australia, the mafia tag is also prevalent as writes Shane Moloney in a recent book *On Murder*: “as early as the 1930s the Victorian police were claiming to see signs of the Black Hand at work among Italian immigrants.” But, as Moloney continues, all these claims have been false and even a report tabled at parliament in 1965 proved to be merely alarmist. Therefore, as Moloney concludes: “it hardly seems fair that law-abiding Italians should find themselves tarred with the Mafia brush ....”<sup>886</sup>

During the war, fascism, Al Capone and the mafia were all mixed together to paint a scary picture of the Italian migrant. *Smith's Weekly* did so sensationally, for its October 26, 1940 issue on the front page produced a letter from Ingham, which he, the editor, had received. The letter told the editor to “shut up writing about Italian your brain will be blown out.”<sup>887</sup> The letter was signed MN, which according to the editor was the *mano negra*, the Black Hand, the mafia. The letter made the headlines with the front page heading stating: “Threat to Murder Smith's Editor by a Dago in Ingham.” The following issue had quite a comical headline “Smith's Editor Still Lives”.<sup>888</sup> It's hard to imagine in today's politically sensitive environment how such blatant xenophobia was allowed to go to press?

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<sup>884</sup> Richard Gambino, “The Crisis of Italian American Identity” in *Beyond the Godfather*, edited by A.K. Ciongoli and Jay Parisi, (UPNE: Hanover, 1997) p.274.

<sup>885</sup> *ibid*, p.278.

<sup>886</sup> Shane Moloney, “Melbourne is Murder”, *On Murder: True Crime Writing in Australia*, edited by K. Greenwood. (Black Inc: Melbourne, 2000), p.172.

<sup>887</sup> *Smith's Weekly*, October 26 1940, p.1.

Such images of the Godfather have been popularised in Australia by writers such as Bob Bottom who in his best selling book *The Godfather in Australia* wrote: “Whether Australians like to acknowledge it or not, Italians have been involved in organised crime from its beginnings in this country.”<sup>889</sup> Yet, according to a study by Ronald Francis entitled *Migrant Crime in Australia*, Italians at the time of the study were the only foreign language group in which the crime rate was lower than the NSW born. This was because; argued Francis “this group is, as one would expect, predominantly Roman Catholic.”<sup>890</sup>

Back in the 1960s several shootings of Italians occurred at Victoria market. Bob Bottom dedicated two books on the shooting and like the media at the time concluded that these shootings at Victoria market were proof of the existence of the mafia within the Italian community. Hence the shootings called into question the status of the Italian community in Melbourne.<sup>891</sup> Of, course, when the trials of those suspected took place it was found that there was no evidence of organised crime.<sup>892</sup> Yet the myth continues to exist.

Frank Galbally, leading Australian criminal lawyer, shares a similar story about the Tropeano family in his autobiography entitled *Galbally*. Galbally writes: “... as a legacy of the Second World War, Italian migrants met with considerable antipathy right through to the 1960s. Italians and people of Italian extraction were frequently the subject of attacks, both physical and verbal, by young Australian louts.”<sup>893</sup> According to Galbally, on one occasion Giuseppe Tropeano fought back and soon found himself charged with assault upon a young Australian youth. Following the charges, the Minister for Immigration,

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<sup>888</sup> *Smith's Weekly*, November 2 1940, p.1.

<sup>889</sup> Bob Bottom, *The Godfather in Australia: Organised Crimes Australian Connections*, (Reed: Sydney, 1979), p.14.

<sup>890</sup> Ronald D. Francis, *Migrant Crime in Australia* (UQP: St Lucia, 1981), p.75.

<sup>891</sup> Naomi Rosh White and Peter B White, *Immigrants and the Media: Case Studies in Newspaper Reporting*, (Longman Cheshire: Melbourne, 1983), p.94.

<sup>892</sup> *ibid*.

Alexander Downer (senior) sought to deport Giuseppe Tropeano to Italy. Galbally took and defended Tropeano's case and was outraged when he was informed by Alexander Downer that the youth was in the mafia. Galbally reacted by issuing a writ against the Minister. The writ prevented the deportation and according to Galbally: "Tropeano remained in Australia, later to marry and start his own branch of the family."<sup>894</sup>

When FILEF organiser, Ignazio Salemi, overstayed his visa and went into hiding the media looked hard for something more than a political activist overstaying his visa. It was hardly enough material to make a headline. Eventually, they found something. The headline stated that Salemi had mafia links. The link was, of course, quite obscure. In 1974, a man who originally came from Australia but returned to Calabria, South of Italy, wanted to re-enter Australia and used Salemi as a reference. According to the paper this man had mafia links. Salemi, on the other hand, had never heard of this man. Nonetheless, the headline was there.<sup>895</sup> *News Weekly*, on the other hand, which until this point had expressed concerns about Salemi's Communist links, didn't follow the tabloid's lead in linking Salemi to the mafia.

The height of the mafia hysteria came with the disappearance of Donald Mackay in Griffith, New South Wales. Donald Mackay, an anti-drugs crusader, disappeared in July 1977. His body was never found, but a coroner in 1984 found that he had died of a willfully inflicted gunshot wound, while a later report found that police members, politicians and "society members" were responsible for his death. This led to the eventual prosecution of James Frederick Bazley, who has always maintained his innocence. Despite the various investigations, including a royal commission, the

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<sup>893</sup> Frank Galbally, *Galbally!* (Viking: Melbourne, 1989), p.127.

<sup>894</sup> *ibid.*, p.131.

<sup>895</sup> *Herald Sun*, August 23, 1977, (newspaper clipping)

disappearance of Donald Mackay led to the tarnishing of Italians in Griffith as being involved in organized crime. In fact, the recent telemovie *Underbelly*, Griffith was portrayed as being a town under the control of the Calabrian mafia. The Donald Mackay murder also implicated the once local politician, Al Grassby as being a part of the plot.<sup>896</sup> After Al Grassby's death in 2005, the journal *The National Observer*, a journal started by Santamaria and run by the National Civic Council, continued to fuel the mafia hysteria arguing that Al Grassby's election campaign was funded by the mafia.<sup>897</sup>

Social exclusion continued through the 1980s and still existed to the 1990s. Stephanie Lindsay Thompson on her study of Italians who returned to Italy after first migrating to Australia found that in some cases: "... continuing racial antipathies, which seem to have contributed in no small degree to the stresses placed on these Italians in Australia and to have led directly and indirectly to the return to Italy of many who might otherwise have made Australia their permanent home."<sup>898</sup> Even a 1981 Government-sponsored report on Italian immigration found that most Australians preferred the Northern Italian migrant rather than the Southern Italian migrant.<sup>899</sup>

## THE ITALIAN PROBLEM IN THE CHURCH

Right until recent times the Church in Melbourne was predominantly Irish. Those of an Italian descent and culture found the prevalent culture "unwelcoming".<sup>900</sup> Its adherents

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<sup>896</sup> C.A. Gregory, "Mackay, Donald Bruce", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 15. (Melbourne University Press: Melbourne, 2000) pp.234-235.

<sup>897</sup> Editorial- "Mafia Influence and the Whitlam Government", *The National Observer*, No.65, Winter 2005, Pp. 2-3.

<sup>898</sup> Stephanie Lindsay Thompson, *Australia Through Italian Eyes*, (Oxford University Press: Melbourne, 1990), p.188.

<sup>899</sup> Helen Ware, *A Profile of the Italian Community in Australia*, (Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs: Melbourne, 1981), p.13.

<sup>900</sup> R.A. Baggio, *The Shoe in my Cheese*, (Footscray Institute of Technology: Melbourne, 1989), p.94.

promoted Ireland as proof to the whole world of the joy and life and sanity of outlook, which sprang from the Catholic Church.<sup>901</sup>

Yet in Australia, Italians were not treated with the greatest pastoral care. In fact, a degree of intolerance greeted them. Italians even within the Australian Catholic church became identified as a problem – the Italian problem. A label first used foolishly by B.A.

Santamaria in a 1939 article in the *Australian Catholic Record*. The label has remained attached to the Italian community right until this day.

Fr Mambrini wrote about their plight in 1928 after being commissioned by the Italian Apostolic delegate Mons. Cattaneo. He found in North Queensland a desperate situation. He found problems in the local conditions, the language, a great degree of indifference between the clergy and the Italian community. According to Mambrini “they go to church; they are entirely at a loss as they do not understand the sermons” and many didn’t even have the clothes.<sup>902</sup> This, according to Mambrini made the Italians feel “despised and humiliated”,<sup>903</sup> not helped by the lack of sympathy “between the Irish priest and the Italian migrant.”<sup>904</sup>

Mannix’s ongoing hostilities with the Apostolic Delegate reflected a deep-seated hostility to Rome and Roman ways. Dr Eric D’arcy, who knew Mannix well, argued that Mannix “constantly referred to clerics in France and Italy as not being fully masculine: they wore soutaines in public and rode girls’ bicycles...”<sup>905</sup> Even when welcoming Fr Modotti’s

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<sup>901</sup> W.J. Lockington, *The Soul for Ireland*, (Macmillan: Melbourne, 1920), p.151.

<sup>902</sup> Fr Mambrini, “Report of a Two Months’ Visit to the Italian Settlement on the Herbert River”, reproduced in full in Cresciani, *Migrants or Mates*, (Knockmore: Sydney, 1988) p.103.

<sup>903</sup> *ibid.* p.104.

<sup>904</sup> *ibid.* p.104.

<sup>905</sup> Dr Eric D’Arcy, transcript of interview, November 15 1976, (MCPC).

arrival in Australia in 1938, Mannix made it clear that Modotti's job was specifically to assimilate the Italian migrants so there would be no need for Italian chaplains.

W.B. Borrie, in his studies of Italians and Germans in Australia, wrote in 1954 that the "Italians have had no strong religious affiliations" and that the "church has not the significance for the Italian... which it had for the German."<sup>906</sup> While, demographer, Charles Price, argued that the task of assimilating Southern Italians has been difficult because of huge families and social custom.<sup>907</sup>

On the theories of "descent and culture" and social exclusions of Italians in Australia particularly in the Catholic Church, a considerable debate has taken place. The policy of assimilation has been superseded by a policy of multiculturalism. Yet, even within a multi-cultural Church, which is by nature universal, the Italian problem remained. The literature has quite clearly reflected this: i.e. the Italians were a problem in the days of assimilation and are still a problem.<sup>908</sup> A good example of this is such comments by Patrick O'Farrell:

Within many parishes migrants were subject to strong pressures to assimilate, to adopt Australian religious ways and to drop their own. This pressure conflicted in particular with the Italians' desire to retain their own form of worship – notably their saints' days, statues and habits of devotion. Some parishes bluntly refused to accommodate such differences of Catholic behaviour; in very few were they welcome. As a consequence, many Italian Catholics – disposed by their background to anti-clericalism – deserted the parish churches, and the regular practice of their religion. Where they remained, their participation in, and contribution to, Australian Catholic life was relatively small.<sup>909</sup>

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<sup>906</sup> W. B. Borrie, *Italians and Germans in Australia: A Study of Assimilation*, (Cheshire: Melbourne, 1954), p.222.

<sup>907</sup> C. Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia*, (Australian National University: Melbourne, 1963), p.299.

<sup>908</sup> B.A. Santamaria, "The Italian Problem in Australia", *Australasian Catholic Record*, October 1939; M. Kelly, "Problems Associated with Ministering in Italian Parishes", *Australasian Catholic Record*, No.1. 1979, p.32; A. Pittarello, *Soup Without Salt* (Centre for Migration Studies: Sydney, 1980).

<sup>909</sup> O'Farrell, *op.cit.* p.404.

Italian Catholics being a problem for the Australian church is deeply entrenched in the attitudes of Australian Catholics. Jim Griffin, ever faithful in illustrating such points – refers to B.A. Santamaria’s father Giuseppe Santamaria’s religious practice as follows: “They were pious Catholics, but Joseph, in true Sicilian style, was not regularly at Sunday Mass.”<sup>910</sup> What the so-called true Sicilian styles that Jim Griffin refers to is the so-called Italian Problem.

Father Kelly in an article in the *Australian Catholic Record* argued about the problems of Italian migrants in his parish. In this article Kelly makes an interesting concession: “let us refer to the Australians with an Italian background as Italians and the Australians with an Irish background as Australians.”<sup>911</sup> On face value, one may argue why the Italian couldn’t be referred to the Australian and the Irish as the Irish?

Earlier in the mid 1920s Fr de Francesco, Italian chaplain in Melbourne, wrote to his provincial about the situation of the Italian community and their religious practices. De Francesco wrote: “Generally speaking the families are good. Their kids go to the Catholic schools, vices such as dishonesty, drunkenness, are rare among them. The only defect is their neglect of their religious duties... It’s a complex problem. Some are ignorant of their duties, while some work for bosses who do not send them to Mass. The problem here is that their bosses are Protestants. But the work they do is hard, normally fruit vendors and their hours are a grand obstacle.”<sup>912</sup>

Despite writing about the Italian problem in 1939, later in 1981, B.A. Santamaria mentioned the Catholic intolerance, although briefly: “we learnt to take the appellation

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<sup>910</sup> James Griffin, “The Santamaria Legacy, *Eureka Street*, April 1999, p.26.

<sup>911</sup> Michael Kelly, “Problems Associated with a Parish comprised of Australians of Italian and Irish descent”, *Australasian Catholic Record*, No.3. October 1979, pp.30-31.

‘dagoes’ and not to challenge the superiority of our White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (or Catholic) tormentors. There were too many of them.”<sup>913</sup> as does B.A. Santamaria’s brother, Joe Santamaria: “There were times when difficulties did arise, when natural Australians exhibited signs of resentment towards immigrant Italians. Such resentment also occasionally reared its head on the question of religion”. And further on Joe Santamaria states: “one of the Catholic players said to me: ‘it’s your turn Darkie.’ Robert my Protestant friend, turned on him and said: ‘don’t you ever use that term again or I’ll give you a blood nose.’”<sup>914</sup>

The religion of Italians, particularly the Italian migrants, is best summed by Fr Adrian Pittarello in his study of the Italian migrants entitled *Soup Without Salt*. “We may conclude this chapter by saying that what has been interpreted as lack of faith in many migrants by moralising scholars was perhaps not so. Enough evidence has been offered by this research to suggest that Italian migrants were much more religious and attached to their church than they were often given credit for.”<sup>915</sup>

## SANTAMARIA AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

In chapter six we read how Santamaria (the few times he did actually mention it) was confronted by social exclusion. Now we turn our focus chronologically on how Santamaria was treated as a result of his Italian surname.

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<sup>912</sup> Fr. Vincenzo De Francesco, Letter to the R.P. Provinciale, July 2 1923, *op.cit.* p.94.

<sup>913</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.5.

<sup>914</sup> Joseph N. Santamaria, *The Education of Dr Joe*, (Connor Court Publishing: Bacchus Marsh, 2006), p.19.



In the world in which Santamaria was promoting his ideas there was hostility. A letter to the editor in 1960 demonstrated the extent of the gulf between Santamaria's ideas and how they were interpreted by the wider population: "... given half a chance, the Santamarian concept of a corporate State would mean a harsh censorship of literature.... State subsidies for church schools, peasant farms with hordes of subsistence farmers from Southern Italy...."<sup>916</sup>

As early as 1945 Santamaria found resistance and suspicion towards the Southern Italian and its peasantry within the National Catholic Rural Movement:

For a long time I have tried to make out what is the difference between the policy of Independent Farming advocated by the Rural Movement, and the peasantry which is so common throughout Europe. After long consideration I have come to the conclusion that there is no difference at all. That being so I do not believe that you have any hope of convincing the people of Australia....<sup>917</sup>

With a pro-immigration attitude in place, B.A. Santamaria began to propose Land Settlement schemes.<sup>918</sup> The idea was to settle Italian migrants in regional farms throughout Victoria, NSW and Tasmania. To achieve this end, Santamaria had gained the support of the Italian Government.<sup>919</sup> To Santamaria the "Land Settlement Bill" was the beginning of what he has called "the outbreak of sectarian and racial feeling..." and it became a "major event in the chapter of unpleasant incidents."<sup>920</sup>

Perhaps a number of important points could be argued about the Land Settlement schemes of Santamaria. First and foremost, B.A. Santamaria himself had Italian migrants

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<sup>915</sup> Pittarello, *op.cit.* p.89.

<sup>916</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, January 19 1960, (newspaper clipping).

<sup>917</sup> *Rural Life*, August 1945, p.14.

<sup>918</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.128.

<sup>919</sup> Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Documentation on the Italian Contribution to Land Settlement*, (Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato: Rome, 1955), pp.73, 118-122.

in mind when he proposed the schemes. What followed were fears of Italian colonies in Australia, and many in the ALP and Liberal Parties were anxious about such a racial minority in rural areas. To combat these fears the scheme was repackaged by the NCRM and B.A. Santamaria to include all migrants.<sup>921</sup> Despite the repackage, to B.A. Santamaria settling Italian migrants was still his chief motivation<sup>922</sup> while many in the Movement thought that the schemes were broader than just to include Italian migrants.<sup>923</sup>

Therefore, B.A. Santamaria was aware of the difficulty of proposing ideas, which would link him to his background. What did surprise B.A. Santamaria was the racial explosion, which followed the attempts to introduce the Land Settlement schemes. Communist propaganda interpreted B.A. Santamaria's self-sufficient plans of decentralism as ideas no different from the ideals applied by Mussolini and Italian fascism,<sup>924</sup> while biographies of Evatt saw the Italian peasants starving on Italian farms and introducing child labor to Australian farms.<sup>925</sup>

The facts were that Italian migrants were successful farmers and this caused resentment particularly among the returned soldiers who had settled on the land in the previous land settlement schemes. In the Murrumbidgee area where a lot of Italian farmers were successfully managing farms, resentment was high and during the Second World War the New South Wales Premier wrote in a report that the older type settler who had been in the area for many years quite liked the Italian migrants who were "good farmers and good citizens". Yet, the returned soldiers didn't share these sentiments and would have

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<sup>920</sup> *Against the Tide*, p.129.

<sup>921</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Letter to Mr. G. Rudduck, May 11, 1952. NCRM.

<sup>922</sup> *Against the Tide*, p.128.

<sup>923</sup> Frank Scully, Letter to the author, June 28 2004, (ACA).

<sup>924</sup> Paul Mortier, *Danger NCC at Work*, (Current Book Distributor: Sydney, 1962), p.37.

<sup>925</sup> Kylie Tennant, *Famous Australians: Evatt, Politics and Justice* (Angus and Robertson: Sydney, 1970), p.249.

“welcomed any opportunity to get rid of them.”<sup>926</sup> The reason for the resentment came from the success of the Italian farmers in such areas the Murrumbidgee. Here the returned soldier settlements had been a complete failure and the soldiers abandoned the land by selling it to Italian migrants who “made it productive” and a “success”.<sup>927</sup>

The irony of the Land Settlement schemes was that there were similar schemes run by the British in Victoria during 1923-1927 and with the British only 50 farms of 361 succeeded.<sup>928</sup> The Italian had not been set a high benchmark. Later Catholic criticisms of B.A. Santamaria’s Land Settlement schemes refer to the 1923-1927 soldier resettlement schemes as reasons why they thought B.A. Santamaria’s ideas were absurd and opposed them.<sup>929</sup> This is despite the Santamaria program being based on ideas, which were already successful in other countries, particularly North Africa and South America. What these critics fail to realize is that their opposition to B.A. Santamaria’s schemes was not because of previous failed attempts at Soldier settlements, but their sectarian and racial inspiration as argued by Patrick Morgan: “The same strain of thinking that has made political capital out of derogatory remarks about peasant Italians now gave us lectures on welcoming ethnic diversity. All very good, except nowhere in the extensive genealogies of racial slurs in Australia was the Italian small-farm episode alluded to, much less apologized for.”<sup>930</sup>

The fear with regard to the Land Settlement schemes was the possibility of crown land facilitating colonies of Italian migrants as stated bluntly by leader of the opposition in the Victorian parliament Henry Bolte: “Can any member visualize what will happen to our

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<sup>926</sup> W.J. Mckell (Premier), Letter to R.H. Prime Minister, September 24, 1942, A.A., MP742/1, 115/1/119.

<sup>927</sup> *The Advocate*, April 4 1945, p.15.

<sup>928</sup> G.F. Plant, *Overseas Settlement: Migration from the United Kingdom to the Dominions*, (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1951), p.105.

<sup>929</sup> James Griffin, “The Santamaria Legacy”, *Eureka Street*, April 1998, p.28; Bruce Duncan, *Crusade or Conspiracy*. (UNSW Press: Sydney, 2001), p.88.

Australian way of life if the group system is to be perpetuated? The stage will be reached when there will be little Europes all over Victoria and, instead of expecting those people to be trusted and to trust us, to inter marry with our race, and ultimately to become loyal and worthy Australians, we shall find that they will remain in their national groups, which will be a most unsatisfactory state of affairs.”<sup>931</sup>

Without a doubt the Land Settlement schemes were the first tremors in the forthcoming earthquake, which was to split the Australian Labor Party. According to Holt, the Movement and the Groupers were using the ALP to push through Bills that would “enable land to be made available” for the settlement “of Italians with foreign capital on our crown lands in Victoria.”<sup>932</sup>

B.A. Santamaria himself recognized the whole affair as the first shots in the Labor Party split that ultimately followed: “...I tried to make the point that all we wanted was third class land, which soldier settlers wouldn’t use. And finally I got agreement from the Italian and the Dutch Governments.... And that plan turned out to be the spark that ultimately set off the split, because it was quite consciously used by elements opposed to my whole idea, to say that what I trying to do was to establish in Australia Italian colonies, based on three acres and the cow....”<sup>933</sup>

The scenario was painted – Santamaria who was using his power to settle Italians on the land controlled the ALP. Sectarianism wasn’t enough, xenophobia was the added ingredient as Santamaria was to specify in a reply to Holt on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1954: “Mr Holt’s allegations are not only untrue, but they constitute a direct appeal to racial

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<sup>930</sup> Patrick Morgan, “Mr Santamaria and the Wolf”, *Quadrant*, October 1987, p.13.

<sup>931</sup> Mr Bolte, “Land Settlement Bill” Legislative Council, December 11 1953, *Parliamentary Debates*, Melbourne, 1954, p.3228.

prejudice to buttress the use of the sectarian weapon.”<sup>934</sup> When the split occurred, certain elements were played. These elements extended beyond mere sectarianism and the name Santamaria allowed opposition to go beyond the existing sectarianism.

The split aroused all the sectarian fears, as argued by Pringle: “The long-hidden resentments in the Labor Party burst forth, releasing with it the flood of anti-Catholic fear and prejudice which always lies below the surface of Australian politics.”<sup>935</sup>

Evatt supporter and Labor parliamentarian, Clyde Cameron wrote several years later about the fiery caucus meeting at the time of the split. According to Cameron, John Fitzgerald of New South Wales who was an Evatt supporter labeled the groupers as right wing fascist; while Jack Mullins a supporter of the groups and the Movement delivered “one of the most brilliant speeches I ever heard in caucus. It was theatre at its very best. You could see that he was speaking from the heart, telling us what a lot of crooks we were. You could hear the heroes of Ireland as he spoke.”<sup>936</sup> While Eddie Ward, another Evatt supporter argued that the groupers took their orders from Pope Santamaria.<sup>937</sup>

For those aligned with the left there was an almost deep-seated paranoia about Catholics who fleeced the poor in the name of superstition as well as having “lecherous priests” using tunnels to get into convents filled with “sex-mad nuns”,<sup>938</sup> while to the lefty Labor supporter – “bloody groupers were everywhere.”<sup>939</sup> To the suspicious mind what was

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<sup>932</sup> R. Holt, letter to M. Schmella, reproduced in full in Truman, *op.cit.* p.137.

<sup>933</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Interview by Robin Hughes, *op.cit.*

<sup>934</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Letter to *The Age*, reproduced in full in Truman, *op.cit.* p.140.

<sup>935</sup> Pringle, *op.cit.* p.90.

<sup>936</sup> Clyde Cameron, *The Herald Sun*, February 11 1990, p.21.

<sup>937</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>938</sup> George Parsons, “A Labo(u)r Childhood”, *The Overland*, No.149, 1997, p.76.

<sup>939</sup> *ibid.*

worse than a Catholic takeover was its leader who had an Italian surname and was from a Southern Italian family.

Evatt had met Santamaria twice before the 1954 election, but even earlier in 1942 had approached Santamaria for advice on a number of constitutional matters. In his reply to Evatt, B.A. Santamaria raised the issue of the “discriminatory legislation, which at present imposes a financial burden on parents who wish to give their children a specifically religious education.”<sup>940</sup>

After the ALP split some branches in Victoria became DLP branches, while some ALP branches had to recruit members. John Button writing in his autobiography *As it Happens* recalls the demise of his Carlton branch, when all but two of the members became members of the DLP. Button and his two colleagues had to begin the ALP branch and as Button writes: “In Carlton there were new recruits for the Branch. Many of them joined because they were anti-Catholic, pro-communist, deranged or kind-hearted.”<sup>941</sup>

A reason for the opposition towards Santamaria was his Italian background. It is no coincidence that those who opposed Santamaria were what Labor historian Sean Brawley calls the Old Guard who remained the staunch defenders of the so-called “White Australia Policy”. Sean Brawley states: “When we juxtapose the ALP with a century of social change many historians see the ALP as the instigator... with regard to the White Australia Policy, however, it can be argued that into the early 1960’s the ALP has

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<sup>940</sup> B.A. Santamaria to Dr. H.V. Evatt (Attorney General) November 23 1942, (NCC).

<sup>941</sup> John Button, *As it Happened*, (Text: Melbourne, 1998), p.75.

become a brake on change.”<sup>942</sup> Brawley sees the old guard as personified by Arthur Calwell, while the new guard by Gough Whitlam.<sup>943</sup>

During the Second World War, the Australian Labor Party was more ruthless and unsympathetic towards the Italian community than the Menzies Government. Francis Michael Forde, in fact, even entertained the idea in 1942 of deporting Italians at the conclusion of hostilities. Forde, a Catholic like Calwell, belonged to the old guard whose role in the Labor Party split was quite significant.

Santamaria became a major target for the Evatt ALP. This did not phase the Evatt camp and at 1957 conference the ALP took an even stronger pro-British stance on issues of migration and culture. This is in contrast to the groupers and the DLP who were pro-immigration and pro-Italian migration. At this Federal Conference held in Brisbane, Evatt during his speech argued that mass migration had gone out of hand and that non-British migrants were increasingly coming into Australia. His solution was a reduction in the migration program.<sup>944</sup> This was consistent with similar views expressed at an Australian Citizen Convention where Evatt argued that the Australian people “must have British migrants if this country is to retain its population....”<sup>945</sup>

Santamaria, however, in an internal report to his executive highlighted some important statements from Evatt’s Federal Conference Speech of 1958. He quoted statements such as: “various sections of immigrants are now publishing newspapers in their own language...” According to Evatt such foreign language papers were an indication “that some people think that it does not matter whether the newcomers to Australia become

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<sup>942</sup> Sean Brawley, “Long Hair and Ratbags: The ALP and the Abolition of the White Australia Policy”, *A Century of Social Change*, (Pluto Press: Sydney, 1992), p.204.

<sup>943</sup> *ibid.*

acquainted with our language or not...”<sup>946</sup> According to a Movement report prepared by Santamaria the decisions of the ALP Federal Conference were “based exclusively on racial intolerance and religious sectarianism. The purpose is quite clearly to discriminate against migration of Europeans from Catholic countries.”<sup>947</sup>

For the old guard the problem became Asian migrants and the maintenance of the White Australia Policy. This however was brought to an end by Al Grassby; according to Professor Richard Bosworth, “... Grassby’s triumph over so formidable a political manipulator as Daly signalled a drastic abandonment of Calwellian policies or rhetoric on migration.”<sup>948</sup>

Another source of opposition to Santamaria came from the Catholic newspaper, which he had initially founded, *The Catholic Worker*. It was banned by Mannix from the Cathedral in 1955 and this led to its eventual demise.<sup>949</sup> His Italian descent and culture became an assembling point of opposition for these Catholic critics.

Santamaria came from a working class migrant family. But Catholic critics of Santamaria argue that this obvious disadvantage was over-played by Santamaria. They set out to diminish his humble beginnings. Take James Griffin for example who argued that B.A. Santamaria did not come from a poor Italian family, rather: “his Sicilian father had become more than the fruiter Bob always said he was, but rather a prospering licensed

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<sup>944</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, March 13 1957, (newspaper clipping).

<sup>945</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, January 24 1958, (newspaper clipping).

<sup>946</sup> Statement by Dr. Evatt on Migration, Final Report on Proceedings of the Federal Conference of the ALP, Brisbane, 11-17 March, 1957, p.44, (NCC).

<sup>947</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “The Significance of the Recent Federal Conference of the Evatt Labor Party”, Undated, 1957, (NCC).

<sup>948</sup> Wilton and Bosworth, *op.cit.* p.33.

<sup>949</sup> James Griffin, “Darkening the Church Door”, *Eureka Street*, Vol.5. No.3, p.37.



grocer”<sup>950</sup> while Colin Thornton-Smith argues that Giuseppe Santamaria could afford the luxury of taking his family to the Aeolian Islands for a holiday.<sup>951</sup>

Other Catholic critics saw his Italian background as the problem, because he dared to import Italian family values into Australia. As an example, in a paper given at a Moral Theology Conference, Bruce Duncan who has dedicated his life to writing about Santamaria concludes in this paper: “my argument then is that Santamaria’s central operative and interpretative principle was derived from his Italian family culture, the values and structure of which he tried to nurture and transplant to Australia.”<sup>952</sup>

What is so wrong about the Italian family principles of Santamaria? Yet to Duncan this is the fundamental weakness. And the understanding of the weakness of this is taken as a given. There is no explanation why such principles were problematic. Although not stated one can read into the following statements that B.A. Santamaria unlike his contemporaries in the *Catholic Worker* and *Campion Society* had a definite weakness: “while most of the Campions began with one or other theory of Catholic Action... Santamaria began with the cultural experience of his Italian family...”. One can interpret this as stating – they had something compared to B.A. Santamaria’s nothing. Or, “so while the Campions looked to Catholic social theory... for Santamaria it was the values of his family experience...”.<sup>953</sup>

From the moment Santamaria stepped onto the public arena, his descent and culture became his weakness as Luscombe writes: ““One unfortunate result is that the figure of Santamaria is firmly fixed in the minds of numerous Australians as a sinister political

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<sup>950</sup> James Griffin, “The Santamaria Legacy”, *Eureka Street*, April 1998, p.26.

<sup>951</sup> Colin Thornton-Smith, *op.cit.* p.56.

manipulator, a Machiavellian character who would have imposed his own fascist-like dictatorship on Australia if his plans had not been foiled....”<sup>954</sup>

In interpreting the opposition to the groupers and the Movement much has been said about sectarianism, i.e. the Movement was opposed because it was Catholic or that it was a right wing Catholic takes over of the ALP. Yet, little has been focused on the racial component of the opposition, particularly on its founder, B.A. Santamaria. The critics of B.A. Santamaria need to be re-interpreted from a racial perspective. Highlighting the need for this re-interpretation is historian Patrick O’Farrell. After reading B.A. Santamaria’s *Against the Tide*, O’Farrell concluded that “the chronicles... of that (largely Catholic) Movement, ... is how nearly this religiously inspired social movement came to victory in secularised Australia”<sup>955</sup> and its “failure at crucial points stemmed from division in Catholic ranks...”<sup>956</sup> What O’Farrell highlights is that it was more than sectarianism that caused the Movement to fail; it was because it was strongly opposed by some Catholics. Was it the non-Irish background of its leader, B.A. Santamaria?

B.A Santamaria had to fight two cultural stereotypes: the first was that he was fascist, or even modelled himself on Mussolini and the second that his organisation was run like the mafia and that he was a sort of a godfather figure. The first racial tag of being a fascist was put up as early as 1936. The argument put forth was simple. B.A. Santamaria was of an Italian extraction and during 1922 to 1943 fascism ruled Italy. Therefore, being Italian, anti-communist and conservative, B.A. Santamaria would have ultimately been considered a fascist. Critics of B.A. Santamaria like Paul Ormonde gives excellent

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<sup>952</sup> Bruce Duncan, “Some Ethical Aspects of the CSSM and the Split in the 1950s”, Moral Theology Conference, Melbourne, 12 July 1995, p.14.

<sup>953</sup> *ibid*, p.2.

<sup>954</sup> Luscombe, *op.cit.* p.187.

<sup>955</sup> Patrick O’Farrell, “The Cultural Ambivalence of Australian Religion”, *Papers on Australian Cultural History*, (ANU: Canberra, 1982), p.3.

illustrations with such comments like the following: “Santamaria’s public speaking skills were honed in his days as a student activist in campus debates, particularly in defence of Mussolini’s Italy...”<sup>957</sup>

B.A. Santamaria was certainly aware of Fascism. He had thoroughly researched the topic in his 1934 thesis. Fascism in Italy according to B.A. Santamaria was “a minority which relied on the support of a whole people thoroughly disgusted with the misgovernment of a parliamentary regime.”<sup>958</sup> Despite some researchers who have adopted conspiratorial theories about B.A. Santamaria’s 1934 thesis,<sup>959</sup> the thesis mainly details the factors leading to fascism.<sup>960</sup>

According to a 1936 police report on fascist activities in Australia, Santamaria had attempted to extend the activities of the *fascio* to Melbourne University. It stated that Santamaria was the editor of the *Catholic Worker* “a strong anti-Communist church organ.”<sup>961</sup> The report is ambiguous and such a claim seems highly unlikely. There is no evidence in the report in support of the claim that Santamaria attempted to start a *fascio*. The police report speaks of Santamaria being a leader of “the group.” The only group the investigator could have been alluding to was the Campion Society. Were the Campions merely a cover-up name for undercover *fascio* members? The accusation is as comical as the conclusion drawn from it. The accusation also fails to acknowledge that the *Catholic Worker* was as critical of Capitalism as it was of Communism. The *Catholic Worker* was based on the American model of the *Catholic Worker*, founded by Dorothy Day, who in the United States was far from being associated with Fascism. In fact,

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<sup>956</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>957</sup> Paul Ormonde, “An Authoritarian Man” in *Santamaria: Politics of Fear* (Spectrum: Melbourne, 2000), p.97.

<sup>958</sup> Santamaria, “Italy Changes its Shirts” p.1.

<sup>959</sup> Venturini, *op.cit.* 123-142.

<sup>960</sup> Santamaria, “Italy Changes its Shirts”, pp. 2-3.

Dorothy Day had to fight off the tag of being a communist right up until her death. It seems that the policeman who wrote the report based his accusation on the simple piece of information that Santamaria was of “Italian parentage.”<sup>962</sup>

Fascism in time has had two definitions. The first was connected with Benito Mussolini and the Fascist regime in Italy. Italian fascism with Mussolini was a political system that was totalitarian, authoritarian, anti-communist, built around the cult of its leader Benito Mussolini.<sup>963</sup> The police report above was associating Santamaria with this understanding of fascism. In time, however, a more general use of the word fascism has appeared, mainly from the left and communist sources that applied it to anyone who held conservative ideas. Santamaria, as I will argue, went from being interpreted as a fascist in the specific to fascist in the more general.

Another important part of Santamaria’s defence is Frank Maher’s published contribution via an Australian Catholic Truth Society pamphlet on behalf of the organisation Australian Catholic Action in which B.A. Santamaria was his assistant. He wrote in this pamphlet: “As to Fascism in particular, Catholics share many of the misgivings which people feel as to its final results. Since most Italian Fascists are Catholics, since Fascism saved the Church and Italy from a Communist persecution, it is only natural that the Church should try to work with the existing Government. But you remember the strong language used by Pius XI, and his vigorous censures, when the Italian Government made ridiculous and offensive charges against the Church a few years ago, and his sharp protest against what he called the pagan worship of the State.... Nor, again, did the Pope

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<sup>961</sup> “A Summary of Italian Fascist Activities and Propaganda in Australia, December 1936”, reproduced in full in G. Cresciani, *Migrants or Mates*, (Knockmore Press: Sydney, 1988), p.189.

<sup>962</sup> *ibid.* It is important to recognise that this conclusion is based on the evidence presented by the policeman and according to this evidence once can safely argue that there was no evidence to support the policeman’s claim, apart from Santamaria’s parentage.

<sup>963</sup> See Pollard, *op.cit.*

hesitate to condemn the Royalist movement among French Catholics (known as the Action Francaise)....”<sup>964</sup>

Communist propaganda made mileage by linking B.A. Santamaria and the Movement to Fascism. Paul Mortier in the pamphlet *Danger: NCC at Work* argued that the “state structure of Mussolini’s fascist Italy conforms precisely with the NCC’s ideal...”<sup>965</sup>

While Evatt’s biographer Kylie Tennant claims that the “... parallel development sketched out by Catholic Action for the cities was for the trade unions to join together with the employers in associations where both would be listened to by a benign and judicial third party who would tell them what to do.”<sup>966</sup> Tennant then continues to state, “... to Australian unionists this smacked of Mussolini’s Italy...”<sup>967</sup> Even as late as 1984, the perception was that Santamaria “offered its readers a mixed bag of backward looking radical anti-industrialism and... anti-communism, much like Italian dictator Benito Mussolini.”<sup>968</sup>

The second negative image was that Santamaria and the Movement were represented as mobsters and B.A. Santamaria as the Godfather.

In the 1980s when four unions associated with the National Civic Council returned to the Australian Labor Party, those in the ALP expressed alarm. In the *Labor Militant*, the cartoonist represented the National Civic Council as mobsters.<sup>969</sup>

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<sup>964</sup> Frank Maher, *The Catholic Revival*, (ACTS: Melbourne, 1938), p.18.

<sup>965</sup> Mortier, *op.cit.* p.38.

<sup>966</sup> Tennant, *op.cit.* p.249.

<sup>967</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>968</sup> Roger Miles, “Behind the Resurgence of the NCC”, *Direct Action*, May 16 1984, p.9.

<sup>969</sup> Garry Walters, “The Campaign against the NCC unions”, *Labor Militant*, April 1984, p.5.

party opposition. The re-admittance of these unions would allow him to do just that.

The NCC and its splinter groups, the Industrial Action Fund and the Industrial Research Organisation, have nothing in common with the interests of the broad labour movement. They are forces outside the labour movement that are devoted to destroying all the progressive elements within it.

The IAF, which the four unions concerned belong to and which consists of the trade union operatives of the NCC, should not fool us either. The leopard has not changed its spots. In fact the orientation of the IAF to the unions and the ALP is even more dangerous than Santamaria's obsession with the cultural and educational front.

The campaign against the re-admittance of these unions is well under way inside the Victorian ALP.

For example:

- According to a report in the Sun newspaper on March 4 a General Meeting of the Victorian Socialist Left re-affirmed its complete opposition to

*Labor Militant*, April 1984



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In October 1995 the *Canberra Times* reported with blaring headlines: “Mafia not operating in Australia”. The article reported: “One of the biggest investigations into organised crime in Australia’s history, Operation Cerberus, has concluded the Mafia does not operate in Australia and that Italo-Australian organised crime was disintegrating.”<sup>970</sup> To B.A. Santamaria, the *Canberra Times* article and a similar article in the *Melbourne Age*<sup>971</sup> were marked for attention, photocopied and filed in the NCC file room. Yet, the image of a Godfather figure ultimately found its way to be used to describe B.A. Santamaria.

One classic example is a comment made by Bruce Duncan who has spent his life critiquing the life of B.A. Santamaria. In an *Age* article commenting about the Split and his book *Crusade or Conspiracy* Duncan argues that Santamaria had never intended “to be marooned outside the Labor Party. He intended to be like a **Godfather figure** [My emphasis] within the Labor Party, with his cohorts implementing the sorts of policies he was pushing at the time.”<sup>972</sup> In his later book *Crusade or Conspiracy*, Duncan gives a straw man conclusion which allows him to re-emphasise the Godfather image: “A number of people mentioned to this author that Santamaria’s operation struck them like that of an

<sup>970</sup> *The Canberra Times*, November 10 1995, (newspaper clipping).

<sup>971</sup> *The Age*, November 10 1995, p.3.

Italian godfather, benignly exercising influence from above yet not accountable through normal democratic methods.”<sup>973</sup>

Then we have the example of Terry Monagle who, although not referring to B.A. Santamaria as the Godfather, certainly has him as a figure quite similar to the film image arguing that B.A. Santamaria was an Italian Poppa “at the head of a table laying down the rules with an inherent authority.”<sup>974</sup>

But there is something quite disturbing about assertions such as the Godfather or Italian poppa. Yes, Santamaria did run his organization with authority. Having worked for the organization, I personally can attest to this. But my personal observations of the Movement would lead me to disagree that the way the organization was managed by Santamaria was at all Italian in its approach. In fact, if you remove race from the equation you could find more similarities to the way the Movement was operated in a typical Edwardian household, for example, as presented by Thea Thompson in her book *Edwardian Childhoods*. An Edwardian household, as an example, with classes, servants, maids and without any sort of dissent. An Edwardian household as described as following is much closer to the Movement and Santamaria’s style than any negative Italian stereotype: “In the household economy which dominated England in the sixteenth and eighteen centuries Puritanism emerged as the religious ideology, and the spiritual sanctity of the family was one of its fundamental principles. The family reflected the true principles of hierarchy. The father was head and woman and children were subordinated to him. This concept endured till the twentieth century and is not extinct

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<sup>972</sup> *The Sunday Age*, November 19 2000, p.11.

<sup>973</sup> Duncan, *op.cit.* p.400.

<sup>974</sup> Monagle, *op.cit.* p.81.

today.”<sup>975</sup> But the Edwardian image doesn’t have the negative force that a racially negative image such as the Godfather or even an Italian poppa would have. And the Edwardian household did not try to infiltrate and change society unlike the Movement.

While B.A. Santamaria’s Italian weakness is no longer a point of debate within the Catholic Church, B.A. Santamaria’s orthodoxy has become mixed with his Italian background. Santamaria argued for the “Roman” in Roman Catholicism and this became incompatible with the ideas of those calling for an “Australian Church”. Father Michael Kelly showed this anti-Romanism when describing B.A. Santamaria: “Religiosity, his home is in European, rural, peasant Catholicism. He is theologically illiterate....”<sup>976</sup>

## CONCLUSION

According to philosopher James Franklin, “Australia should have been the least likely place for him to fall to earth. The sceptical, secular, isolated Anglophone society of mid-twentieth century Australia was a stony ground for an ideologue with a European sensibility and a vast plan to reorder society according to a rational and divine order.”<sup>977</sup>

The culture in Australia was British and B.A. Santamaria despite his loyalty and having been born in Australia was an outsider who had to earn his absorption into the Australian culture. An excellent illustration of the problem B.A. Santamaria faced is found in the foreword to his own autobiography *A Memoir*, written by English commentator and friend of B.A. Santamaria, Malcolm Muggeridge: “The Santamarias, indeed, provide an excellent illustration of how poor Italians arriving in Australia as

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<sup>975</sup> Thea Thompson, *Edwardian Childhoods*, (Routledge and Kegan: London, 1981), p.4.

<sup>976</sup> Cameron Forbes, “The End of the War”, *The Australian Magazine*, September 23-24, 1995, p.18.

<sup>977</sup> James Franklin, *Catholic Values and Australian Realities*, (Connor Court Publishing: Bacchus Marsh, 2006) p.63.



aliens in their traditions...can be absorbed, and though application and hard work, become in due course not just authentic Australians, but eminent in their different sphere...<sup>978</sup>

The problem was that you had to earn your Australian identity. Despite Santamaria's birth taking place in Australia and having done his schooling in Australia as well as living his entire life here, for someone of an Italian background, you still had to prove and earn your Australian identity. Under such circumstances one can appreciate Santamaria's ambivalence to his background. A hero would have challenged this status quo, but Santamaria was no hero.

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<sup>978</sup> Malcolm Muggeridge, foreword to *Against the Tide* (Oxford University Press: Melbourne, 1981) p.ix.

## CHAPTER 8:

### B.A. SANTAMARIA AND THE MOVEMENTS: THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC RURAL MOVEMENT, THE MOVEMENT, THE NATIONAL CIVIC COUNCIL AND CATHOLIC ACTION

This chapter will highlight the influences of the Movements began by Santamaria and if any of these movements' had any Italian influences. In chapter four the argument put forward was that B.A. Santamaria was strongly influenced by his Southern Italian culture. His Southern Italian culture was characterized by the primacy of the family and what Robert Orsi calls the *domus*. Within the *domus* there were the characteristics of his background: work, the oldest son, women, self-sufficiency, religion and social networks/occupational groups. In this chapter I will endeavor to explore how this background and its characteristics influenced the institutions he founded.

B.A. Santamaria was a man of institutions. He began many, reformed some, attempted to take some over and tried to influence others. The key questions about these institutions are: Where did they get their origins? How were they introduced in the Australian environment? Did his Italian background shape and determine the directions of these institutions? And finally, did these institutions at the end of the day redefine their founder, B.A. Santamaria?

When Santamaria was asked in 1997 about where he got his ideas from he answered in the following way: "Well you get your philosophy ... out of the whole background of

your existence, which comes from the family into which you were born, the schools to which you went ... and so on.”<sup>979</sup>

## THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC RURAL MOVEMENT

Perhaps one of the earliest organizations begun by B.A. Santamaria was the National Catholic Rural Movement (NCRM), which began in 1939. This did occur after his joining Catholic Action, however, unlike with Catholic Action, B.A. Santamaria was the main driver of the NCRM. With Catholic Action, Santamaria’s role gained significance after the end of the Second World War.

The NCRM was a “hierarchical and authoritarian” organisation, although it did have an executive.<sup>980</sup> Its focus was on the rural rather than the urban. Its beginnings, according to B.A. Santamaria, followed a meeting with Ted Hennessy who, as a country schoolteacher, strongly advocated the model of the Campion Society for farmers that met in rural areas.<sup>981</sup>

The beginnings of the NCRM happened at the same time that war in Europe was commencing and it was because of his work with the NCRM that B.A. Santamaria avoided conscription when it was introduced in 1942. When war broke, and when Italy entered the war in 1940 the NCRM was busy working for the advancement of the farmers as well as opposing the negative image of farmers.

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<sup>979</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview with Robin Hughes, op.cit.

<sup>980</sup> Truman, *op.cit.* p.129.

<sup>981</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, pp.47-48.

As early as 1941 the rural platform of the NCRM was independent farming, co-operatives, education - or rather a PR campaign to change perceptions of farmers and the home – and the Catholic country home.<sup>982</sup> B.A. Santamaria saw education and changing community attitudes about the farmer as the core impetus of the NCRM.<sup>983</sup> Apart from changing perceptions of the farmer, as early as 1941 Santamaria argued that children on the land were an economic asset, while in the city they were a liability.<sup>984</sup> This core belief was that with urbanisation the so-called movement away from the city was destroying the rural community and it was within the rural community that the family was strongest. In his book in 1945 *The Earth - Our Mother*, Santamaria argued that the need for adult education was important to “counter the traditional mental habits of the Australian farmer.”<sup>985</sup> Santamaria also acknowledged that European farming, based on European farming patterns could easily be adopted for Australia with the help of migrants from post-war Europe. As Santamaria wrote in 1947 when looking at Dutch farmers: “These Dutch farmers come from a country where the tradition of agriculture is very well developed....”<sup>986</sup>

This idea, combined with some knowledge of US rural movements and intermingled with his own understanding of his Italian family background, created a new vision of rural Australia. This vision, according to Tom Luscombe was “...the finest fruit of Catholic social effort. It was a movement that literally went to the grass roots of rural problems...”<sup>987</sup>

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<sup>982</sup> “An Earthly Paradise” Report of the Rural Conference”, held at Wagga Wagga, NSW, June 16-19 1941, pp.19-26.

<sup>983</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.49.

<sup>984</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “Programme of the National Catholic Rural Movement.” *The Australasian Catholic Record*, October 1941, No.4. p.231.

<sup>985</sup> Santamaria, *The Earth, Our Mother*, p.55.

<sup>986</sup> *Rural Life*, June 1947, p.3.

<sup>987</sup> Luscombe, *op.cit.* p.183.

These US sources that B.A. Santamaria relied on to help promote his village idea to rural Australia were from Father Luigi Ligutti – with whom Santamaria had much in common, particularly from a cultural perspective. Other influences came from Ralph Borsodi as well as Herbert Agar. These men, not Belloc and Chesterton, were the key people influencing much of B.A. Santamaria's early rural ideas.

The notion of the “back to the land” and the virtues of the peasants on that land was not just a Santamaria idea. Other Catholic thinkers in Australia had similar views. One example is P.J. Cleary, who expressed his in a pamphlet published in 1942 entitled *The Spirit of the Land*, where he stated: “It was the Church who built up the great peasantry of Europe, and also, by the Sacred rites, feast days, processions, open-air pageants, and folklore, she fostered amongst them, entered into all their joys and sorrows, and taught them to see eternal values in the simplest things of life, and down through the centuries she legislated for the welfare of the man on the land, sanctified his toil, and held up agriculture on an ideal for monk and layman.”<sup>988</sup>

One of the sources of B.A. Santamaria's early rural ideas was Ralph Borsodi. Born in New York in 1888, of a Jewish Hungarian background, after working as a consultative economist for several American corporations Borsodi moved from New York to a seven-acre homestead. From this experience Borsodi wrote on economic matters, calling for a return to homesteading in his two books, *This Ugly Civilization* and *Flight from the City*.<sup>989</sup> *The Movement* republished *Flight from the City in Australia* in 1946. In the preface it stated: “Although this book was first written in 1933... the author's arguments are yet valid; in fact they weigh the more heavily for that we are now embarked upon the

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<sup>988</sup> P.J. Cleary, *The Spirit of the Land*, (Renown: Carnegie, 1942), p.10.

<sup>989</sup> Allan Carlson, *The New Agrarian Mind*, (Transaction: New Brunswick, 2004), p.57.

planned economy and the struggle for full employment”.<sup>990</sup> The main thesis of Borsodi’s books was the problem of the large corporations and large industry, which could be combated by small industries. Borsodi was also pro-technology and this distinguishes him from writers in the United Kingdom such as Vincent McNabb, Belloc and Chesterton who opposed modern technology. B.A. Santamaria in his own writing clearly favoured Borsodi.

There were others, on the other hand, who did follow the English distributors. One group was led by Raymond Triado, an early Campion, who with a group of friends established a self-sufficient rural community called Whitlands in the North of Melbourne.<sup>991</sup> The difference that they shared with the English distributors was their view of technology. They were very much against any modern techniques. Take for example the writings of Vincent McNabb on the things that threaten the family. The first danger argued McNabb was the “Danger of Industrialism” which means “an organization of society mainly based on machine – and – factory work; in contrast with an organization mainly based on hand – and home work.”<sup>992</sup> Further on this theme, the 1934 publication, *Flee to the Fields*, which was published by the English Catholic Land Movement to which Belloc and McNabb belonged, the introduction stated that: “the Land Movement is realist. It rejects fashion; it rejects that denial of free will, which is involved in the dogma of inevitable progress. It will put back the clock as far as may be necessary to ensure the happiness and integrity of man...”.<sup>993</sup>

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<sup>990</sup> R. Borsodi, *Flight from the City* (Araluen: Melbourne, 1946), p.4.

<sup>991</sup> Edmund Campion, “The Land of the Holy Spirit”, *Madonna*, September/October 2001, pp.28-29.

<sup>992</sup> Vincent McNabb, “The Family”, *Flee to the Fields: The Founding Papers of the Catholic Land Movement*, first published in 1934, (I.H.S. Press: Norfolk, 2003), p.75.

<sup>993</sup> Introduction to *Flee to the Fields: The Founding Papers of the Catholic Land Movement*, published in 1934, republished in 2002 (I.H.S. Press: Norfolk, 2003) p.6.

The reason to emphasise Belloc, McNabb and Santamaria is the misconceived notion that Santamaria was influenced by the English distributors. This is a notion put forward by Richard Bosworth: “Even B.A. Santamaria, the eminence guise of Catholic right-wing politics and the Brunswick child of southern Italian migrants, seemed more the intellectual creation of the world of ‘Chesterbellocs’...”<sup>994</sup> The fact that there is a major point of departure between the English distributors and the NCRM on the issue of technology cannot be overstated. In criticising B.A. Santamaria by placing him with the English distributors, commentators were able to argue that B.A. Santamaria had a medieval understanding of the land and that his attempts to settle migrants on the land were to impose a medieval vision on Australia.

Back to Borsodi, B.A. Santamaria found a very common theme – the role of women in the home. According to Borsodi the woman is a homemaker and this notion was a central characteristic of B.A. Santamaria and his background.<sup>995</sup> Santamaria strongly promoted this view, particularly in *Rural Life* where an anonymous writer named “Susan” would give pointers on the woman’s way: “The keynote of an attractive home is contentment, the harmony chord cleanliness. The wife is the pivot round which family life revolves, smoothly and efficiently... She exercises the greater influence on the home.”<sup>996</sup> Borsodi confirmed his strong belief of a woman’s role being restricted to that of homemaker. The importance of the mother’s role remained constant for B.A. Santamaria. Writing later in life he stated: “The absorption of married women into the workforce progressively creates a situation in which the family as a basic social unit

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<sup>994</sup> Richard Bosworth, “Post War Italian Immigration”, *The Australian People: An Encyclopedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2001), p.506.

<sup>995</sup> *Rural Life*, November 1945, p.13.

<sup>996</sup> *Rural Life*, February 1947, p.11.

becomes gradually but increasingly incapable of performing its essential functions of caring for the young, the sick and the old.”<sup>997</sup>

B.A. Santamaria never moved away from his position of the woman as the homemaker. In the 1990s, in an interview with Geraldine Doogue on the ABC’s *Insiders* program, Santamaria confirmed his ideal of the mother as homemaker and argued for an economic incentive, which would allow women to have the choice, either to stay at home or to enter the workforce.<sup>998</sup> Geraldine Doogue, in a letter to Santamaria’s daughter Mary Helen Woods following the interview, wrote: “Pity we can’t change his mind about working women in the remaining years of his public life. But, miracles only happen rarely don’t they.”<sup>999</sup>

Borsodi was also a friend of the *Catholic Worker* founder Peter Maurin.<sup>1000</sup> In fact, Maurin would argue also for decentralisation, stressing that there was no unemployment on the land.<sup>1001</sup> Although Borsodi was heavily used and quoted early in the NCRM’s writings, his views became more and more extreme, especially in his later advocacy of eugenics.<sup>1002</sup>

Another Catholic rural pioneer was Luigi Ligutti who during the 1940s and 1950s led the National Catholic Rural Life Conference in the United States. Ligutti emphasised that the “ownership of land and other productive property and the control of technology for human ends were mandates from God.”<sup>1003</sup> Ligutti was known to Santamaria, read by the

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<sup>997</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “The Human Person and the Family in the Thought of Pope John Paul II”, Melbourne. Unpublished. P.12. ACA.

<sup>998</sup> Bob Santamaria, Alan Carlson, ABC – Geraldine Doogue, *Life matters*, July 8 1994, typed transcript.

<sup>999</sup> Geraldine Doogue letter to Mary Helen Woods, February 21 1994, (ACA).

<sup>1000</sup> Dorothy Day, “On Pilgrimage- September 1974” *The Catholic Worker* (Us Edition) September 1974, p.2.

<sup>1001</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>1002</sup> Carlson, *op.cit.* p.72

<sup>1003</sup> Allan Carlson, “Compassionate Conservatism: Ten Lessons from the New Agrarians”, *The Intercollegiate Review*. Fall/Spring, 2000, p.44.



NCRM and at times sourced in the NCRM journal *Rural Life*. Ligutti, like Borsodi, emphasised another characteristic: self-sufficiency.

Ligutti, like B.A. Santamaria, was of an Italian background. Ligutti was born in 1895 of a rural peasant family who migrated to the United States in 1911. The Liguttis, like the Santamarias, had experienced the difficulties in migrating and settling in a new country. Like B.A. Santamaria, Ligutti through the experience of his family, recognised that the “rural home was the natural habitat of the Christian family.”<sup>1004</sup> Ligutti and B.A. Santamaria shared some common characteristics. Both of an Italian background, both of immigrant background and both were devout Catholics.

There are a lot of similarities between the NCRM of Santamaria and the National Catholic Rural Life Conference of Ligutti. Ligutti, like B.A. Santamaria, strongly argued from a core principle that in order to stem the drift from the countryside to the city the solution was to be found in promoting the family farm ideal and self-sufficiency.<sup>1005</sup>

Decentralism of the family, combined with an aggressive immigration policy, gave the newly arrived immigrants the best possible start. To this end B.A. Santamaria, during the 1950s until the Labor Party split, argued for Land Settlement. During this same period Ligutti helped form the International Catholic Migration Commission that assisted migrants with travel loans.<sup>1006</sup>

When B.A. Santamaria began to argue for a population increase, his approach was different to that of Calwell who argued for mass immigration. B.A. Santamaria, on the

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<sup>1004</sup> Allan Carlson, *The New Agrarian Mind*, (Transaction: New Brunswick, 2004), pp.152-153.

<sup>1005</sup> *Rural Life*, December 1945, p.6.

<sup>1006</sup> Bridget and John Newbury 1951-2001, *International Catholic Migration Commission*, Geneva, 2001, pp.3-5.

other hand, argued that the factor limiting population growth was urbanisation.<sup>1007</sup> Rural communities, claimed B.A. Santamaria, had a higher birth rate than the metropolitan areas.<sup>1008</sup> To support his argument B.A. Santamaria used figures from W.B. Borrie who published figures in the *Australian Quarterly*. It was his other figures that have an interesting parallel. B.A. Santamaria cited O.E. Baker's report "Farmers in a Changing World" which featured in the US Department of Agriculture report. This report argued that the birth rate on rural farms surpassed the urban birth rate in the majority of the cases.<sup>1009</sup> After consulting these figures one would conclude that the solution to the population problem was to realise that Australia as a nation "had sold itself to urbanisation..."<sup>1010</sup> and to effect a change to "make the self-contained farm the co-operative community..."<sup>1011</sup> Half a world away, these views were no different to Ligutti's. Even his source Baker was a source heavily used by Ligutti. The core theme, the core source and the core outcome were a decentralised self-sufficient community.

Ligutti's proposals were to use the Granger Homestead idea. The Granger principles were based on subsistence homesteads where the worker was permanently employed and situated on a three to five acre block of land in close proximity to his employment. Hence, industries needed to be decentralised and encouraged in rural areas. The 3 to 5 acres would enable the family to produce the bulk of its own food supply.<sup>1012</sup> It was, however, the Granger Project, which fitted closely with Santamaria's ideas and those of the National Catholic Rural Movement. The only thing, according to Santamaria, that

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<sup>1007</sup> B.A. Santamaria, "Will there be any Australians To-morrow?" *20 Century*, Vol.1. No.1. September 1946, p.49.

<sup>1008</sup> *ibid.* p.50

<sup>1009</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>1010</sup> *ibid.* p.53.

<sup>1011</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>1012</sup> *Rural Life*, December 1945, p.8.

was lacking with Ligutti's theory was the organised group that Santamaria had successfully mobilised through the National Catholic Rural Movement.<sup>1013</sup>

Early on, Granger and Ligutti were frequently mentioned in *Rural Life* and *Freedom*. In September 1939, *Rural Life* argued that "Granger is a practical, thriving community of subsistence homesteaders... led by Rt Rev Luigi Ligutti...",<sup>1014</sup> while in November it once again quoted Ligutti who argued that "the Church must be strong on the land."<sup>1015</sup>

During 1940, Ligutti and Granger were mentioned over a dozen times. As early as 1943, in *Freedom*, there were numerous calls to begin Granger style communities in Australia.

In 1947 Ligutti visited Australia where he travelled across the country giving lectures to large crowds of Catholics. Writing about Ligutti's visit in *Rural Life*, Santamaria stated that "he is one of the few men in our sphere of activity who have done something."<sup>1016</sup>

Also according to B.A. Santamaria, there were similarities between the NCRM and Ligutti's NCRLC. The major difference was that the NCRLC did not organise local groups like the NCRM and Santamaria argued that it was for this reason that Ligutti was in Australia "to study the group method, which we have adopted in Australia..."<sup>1017</sup>

Ligutti's visit to Melbourne created a stir among Catholics. When speaking at Cathedral Hall in 1947, Archbishop Mannix stated that he had never listened "to a lecture with such complete absorption,"<sup>1018</sup> while State parliamentarians such as Stan Keon argued

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<sup>1013</sup> *Rural Life*, February 1947, p.2.

<sup>1014</sup> *Rural Life*, September 9 1939, p.4.

<sup>1015</sup> *Rural Life*, November 11 1939, p.2.

<sup>1016</sup> *Rural Life*, February 1947, P.2.

<sup>1017</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>1018</sup> *ibid.*

that he “could not help being inspired by the veritable revolution, which had been brought in the lives of the people of Granger.”<sup>1019</sup>

In 1953, at a NCRM conference dedicated to migration, Ligutti’s Granger homesteads in dairy areas was proposed by one of the speakers who argued that Ligutti’s “Christian reform” would work in Australia “where there is so much space.”<sup>1020</sup>

Ligutti continued to be included in the pages of *Rural Life* even after the Labor Party split. In 1960, for example, Ligutti’s principles of land reform were published in *Rural Life*, where he argued that agrarian reform needed to be economically sound, morally just, democratic and up to date with science.<sup>1021</sup> B.A. Santamaria, on the other hand in post-1955, was more concerned with Communism rather than assessing and promoting practical rural ideas from Ligutti and the NCLC.

With the failure of the Land Settlement schemes and the Labor Party split, the NCRM settlement ideas and the creativity around it had now become a thing of the past. B.A. Santamaria’s preoccupations were now with the Movement and as a consequence Santamaria eventually resigned from the NCRM.

It is interesting to see that in his post-split writings, Ligutti is rarely mentioned by B.A. Santamaria. Even in his autobiography, *Against the Tide*, Ligutti isn’t mentioned at all. These revolutionary thinkers who promoted a different vision of farm life, who promoted a village setting similar to those found in Europe, became forgotten, erased from B.A. Santamaria’s memory and certainly erased from his recollections. Instead they

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<sup>1019</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>1020</sup> *Migration to Australia: A Challenge to the Church*. (NCRM: Melbourne, 1953), p.67.

<sup>1021</sup> *Rural Life*, April 1960, p.22.

are replaced with the more Anglo-Celtic names of Ted Hennessy, Colin Clark and even the English distributors, Belloc and Chesterton.

Another interesting thing about Ligutti is that his organization and ideas involved many people from an Italian background, unlike the NCRM, which always remained Anglo-Saxon. In an article published in *Rural Life* about Ligutti and his communities, we find the example of 7 farmers. Four of the seven farmers have Italian names: Fontanini, Betti, Battani and Medici.<sup>1022</sup> Compare this to the NCRM where the non-Anglo name was virtually non-existent.

In 1958 the NCRM published a handbook entitled *Fruits of the Vine*. Here it outlined its visions and objectives. This was almost 20 years after the beginnings of the NCRM, but its central aim remained: “restoration to the members of the Catholic rural community a sense of their dignity.”<sup>1023</sup> Its particular objectives were to secure better conditions for the farmers and to “carry out the general work of Christian Social Action within the rural community.”<sup>1024</sup> Lastly it still argued for land settlement of native born and “new Australians”, but it opposed “peasant sized holdings”.<sup>1025</sup>

B.A. Santamaria resigned from the NCRM in April 1961;<sup>1026</sup> his objectives focused more now on fighting communism in the union Movement and the ALP. Santamaria’s resignation saw the beginning of the end for the NCRM. It had served its function to Santamaria and hence its usefulness. This is despite being one of the few organizations

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<sup>1022</sup> *Rural Life*, January 1965, pp.11-13.

<sup>1023</sup> *Fruits of the Vine*, (Renown Press: Carnegie, 1958), p.7.

<sup>1024</sup> *ibid.* p.8.

<sup>1025</sup> *ibid.* p.27.

<sup>1026</sup> *Rural Life*, April 1961, p.5.

that stood strongly in the defence of the boat people arriving from Vietnam later in 1975.<sup>1027</sup>

## CATHOLIC ACTION

Catholic Action in Australia and New Zealand was “inaugurated on 13 September 1937.” Catholic Action attempted to expand the work already begun with the Campion Society. Now it attempted to apply this Campion experience and their study circles to “discussion groups of men and women, boys and girls from farm and factory and city emporium, helping them to live a full Catholic life and to Christianise the environment...”<sup>1028</sup>

In 1938, Santamaria began immediately as assistant director to Frank Maher of Catholic Action, taking up tasks such as the formation of young priests, a quarterly bulletin, as well as guiding the laity in formation in accordance with the social doctrine of the Church.<sup>1029</sup>

In 1945, Mannix sent Frank Maher to Europe to study Catholic Action in Europe. Upon his return in 1946, Maher found himself in a room at Newman College on the fringe of Catholic Action doing mere research work.<sup>1030</sup> Santamaria had taken over. In fact, Santamaria now found himself in charge of Catholic Action, the Catholic Social Studies movement and the National Catholic Rural Movement,<sup>1031</sup> all three organizations being national Catholic organizations.

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<sup>1027</sup> *News Weekly*, June 11 1975, p.4.

<sup>1028</sup> Rev. J. Cleary, *This is Catholic Action*, (ACTS: Melbourne, 1941), p.4.

<sup>1029</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Letter to F. Keane, January 6 1938 cited in full in Morgan, *op.cit.* p.4.

It is interesting to note that one of the first works of Catholic Action in Australia was the founding of the journal *L'Angelo della Famiglia*. The journal, edited by Jesuit Fr Ugo Modotti, began in September 1938. In Mannix's editorial in the first edition, it is stated that: "*L'Angelo della Famiglia* which is published in conjunction with the National Australian Secretariat of Catholic Action comes to fill a real gap with regard to the Italian Community of Australia."<sup>1032</sup> Father Modotti was well versed in the work of Catholic Action in Italy. Modotti had seen its effectiveness in opposing and challenging the fascist regime, but also how it led the Catholic revival in Italy.

In Santamaria's 1939 article on the "Italian Problem in Australia" he sees that the problem of Italian migrants in the Church in Australia could be solved by organising them into Catholic Action. With Modotti's advice, Santamaria inserted his paragraph: "...the actual revival [of religion in Italy], in the opinion of persons in touch with the actual situation has been due to the Catholic Action Movement, which in Italy has worked miracles."<sup>1033</sup> Regardless of Modotti, the Australian notion of Catholic Action was fundamentally different from the Catholic Action found in Italy. But as we have shown in chapter seven, hostilities towards the "Italian way" in the church could not have made a combined group possible. The alternative was to create another form of Catholic Action for the Italians in Australia.

Catholic Action under Santamaria's control was highly centralised. He threatened to resign when the Young Christian Workers wouldn't fall under his control. The Young Christian Workers, like many of the other Catholic Action organizations, questioned the

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<sup>1030</sup> Duncan, *op.cit.* p.91.

<sup>1031</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>985</sup> *L'Angelo della Famiglia*, September 1938, p.1.

<sup>1033</sup> Santamaria, "The Italian Problem in Australia", p.305.

dual role of Santamaria both as head of Catholic Action and the Movement where most of the bishops' money was going to the Movement.<sup>1034</sup>

If this is the case, it may be that Modotti was the person who helped shape B.A. Santamaria into having a programme for the Italian model of Catholic Action. But Santamaria's own writing demonstrates that this attempt failed and it failed due to cultural differences. Writing later in life, Santamaria described his perceptions of the difference in the different cultures' notions of religion: "Italian Catholicism and Irish Catholicism are different. The Irish place a lot of value on regular observance. Many Italians don't; but are equally Catholic in their attitude."<sup>1035</sup>

With the blurred lines of distinction between Catholic Action, the NCRM and the Movement, the 1949 Social Justice Statement by the Australian bishops, which was drafted by Santamaria, gave Catholics no choice when it came to political activity: "any antipathy or even luke-warmness towards Catholic Action on the part of any Catholic could not and cannot be reconciled with a deep and fervent Catholic spirit."<sup>1036</sup>

In 1952, it is unclear what the role of Catholic Action was to be, as B.A. Santamaria was now speaking in more general terms. For example, writing about the main objectives of the Catholic lay effort in Australia, B.A. Santamaria highlighted that its aims were the defeat of communism, the building up of a thoroughly Christian leadership and the Christianisation of the environment of the organizations of employers. As well as these,

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<sup>1034</sup> Duncan, *op.cit.* p.131.

<sup>1035</sup> "Being a Catholic in 1990s, Rev. James Murray Interviews Bob Santamaria." *AD2000*, June 1990, pp.7-9.

<sup>1036</sup> Official Statement of the Archbishops and Bishops of Australia, *Catholic Action in Australia* (ANSCA: Melbourne, 1949) p.3.



it was to reconstruct agriculture and to ensure continual migration of European migrants to rural areas throughout Australia.<sup>1037</sup>

But Catholic Action faded away with the Labor Party split and eventually, with intervention from Rome, Catholic Action became limited to the formation of people rather than direct political action. Meanwhile in Italy, Catholic Action was directly involved in the political process through the Christian Democratic parties.

Michael Fogarty defines Christian Democracy in his important book on the subject as: "an idea, a movement, and the product of a process of history reaching far back through the centuries."<sup>1038</sup> Christian Democratic parties began in the 1880s and were by nature crude negative and limited in its influence.<sup>1039</sup> They were also middle class, and "confessional in the senses not that they took their orders from Bishops, but that their centre of their thinking was the defence of ecclesial interests."<sup>1040</sup> But as the historian of the Christian Democratic Movement, Michael Fogarty explains in the years after the first world war "these deficiencies were made good" making them more socially minded and less pre-occupied with ecclesial matters.<sup>1041</sup>

After the First World War Christian Democracy was best represented in the Sicilian priest Don Luigi Sturzo through the Italian Popular Party. Sturzo found the party in late 1918 when his request for a party received a favourable answer from the Roman Catholic authorities.<sup>1042</sup> The *Populari* as it was to be known drew its principles from Catholic Social teachings, in particular from the Social Encyclical of Pope Leo XXIII,

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<sup>1037</sup> B.A. Santamaria, "Strategy of Lay Apostolate in Australia", *The Priest in Catholic Action*, December 1952, p.13.

<sup>1038</sup> Fogarty, *op.cit.* p.3.

<sup>1039</sup> *ibid.* p. 296

<sup>1040</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>1041</sup> *ibid.* p.297.

<sup>1042</sup> H. Daniel-Rops. *A Fight for God*. London, J.M. Dent and Sons, 1966, p.255.

*Rerum Novarum*. Despite its Catholic principles, the *Popolari* refrained from being a confessional party.<sup>1043</sup> In its first election the Popolari obtained a hundred seats in the Italian parliament and in the words of historian H. Daniel-Rops, the “PPI entered upon a period of three years that were the most brilliant in history...”<sup>1044</sup>

But it was Sturzo's desire to work with the Socialists against the rise of the Fascists that led to its eventual decline, which led the Catholic authorities withdrawing its support. It was this withdrawal of support that Santamaria referred to when he lost support for the Catholic Social Studies Movement in the 1950s.

It was after the Second World War, with the experiences of Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany did the Christian Democracy parties emerge with leaders like Alcide De Gasperi in Italy and Konrad Adenauer in Germany.

It was these men that led the anti-communist fight by remaining in power after the Second World War. In Australia B.A. Santamaria led this anti-communist fight through the Catholic Social Studies Movement.

## CATHOLIC SOCIAL STUDIES MOVEMENT

The idea of the founding of the Movement came from Labor parliamentarian H.M. Cremean. According to Santamaria: “He suggested that I should approach Archbishop Mannix to discuss the Communist situation in the Australian Labor Movement.”<sup>1045</sup>

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<sup>1043</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>1044</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>1045</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.73.

The first meeting according to Santamaria was in August 1941.<sup>1046</sup> Speaking about the organisation in 1991 B.A. Santamaria argued that the Movement was, “formed in 1941 with the specific objective of meeting, defeating and if possible destroying the Communist penetration of the trade union movement and of the Labor Party branches throughout Australia. To do that, as I have said, we had to create a counter-organisation based on three principles: the trained cadre, the union or the factory cell, the central organisation.”<sup>1047</sup> What is remarkable about this comment is the Gramsci-like definition of the Movement.<sup>1048</sup>

The Movement consisted of Catholic men involved in their union. These men were predominately working class and of Irish background. Their role was to contest union elections and to oppose the communist influence in the particular union. This work was aided by the industrial groups; ALP groups with a similar objective began in 1945 in the New South Wales branch of the ALP. The Industrial groups, or better known as the “groups” or “groupers” spread into Victoria in 1946.<sup>1049</sup> This worked in well with the Movement, because of its structure and organization, although Movement members never made up more than 25% of the groups.<sup>1050</sup> During 1945-1949 the Movement successfully helped stem the influence of the Communists in the unions, as Santamaria writes in 1987: “The Movement was the backbone of the ALP Industrial Groups which, from 1949 to 1953, broke the near-monopoly of power held by the Communists in the trade union movement, a defeat from which, despite their substantial remaining strength, they have never fully recovered.”<sup>1051</sup>

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<sup>1046</sup> *ibid.* p.76.

<sup>1047</sup> *ibid.* p.3.

<sup>1048</sup> In a conversation with the author, B.A. Santamaria stated that Gramsci’s ideas had helped him to shape the *Movement* to fight the Communists in the Unions. He also stated that when reading Gramsci, he would replace the word Communism with Catholicism.

<sup>1049</sup> Murray, *op.cit.* p.17.

<sup>1050</sup> *ibid.* p.52.

<sup>1051</sup> Santamaria, *Australia at the Crossroads*, p.85.

The Movement was the core work of Santamaria, an organisation that he controlled from the start to his very death. According to B.A. Santamaria the Movement was created “to break Communist control of the Unions” and that the Movement devised its own model of “...the trained activist against the Communist cadre; the Movement group against the Communist cell; and the Movement’s national organization against the Communists party’s democratic centralism.”<sup>1052</sup> Some argue that its idea was textbook Gramscism, with which Santamaria was very familiar<sup>1053</sup>. Unlike the NCRM, the Movement was a “counter-movement”<sup>1054</sup> and as a counter-movement it opposed the Communist movement.

The question needs to be put? Was the anti-communism nature of the Movement something particularly coming from Santamaria or was it something particularly Catholic at the time. The answer is evident in the literature at the time. Australian Catholicism was fiercely anti-communist and Santamaria like most Catholics was one of the Church’s anti-communist crusaders. A profound example of the anti-communist culture, is found in the recollection of Fr Harold Lalor, a Jesuit who founded the Institute of Social Order: “Fr Harold Lalor SJ was a dynamic speaker. He looked too severe to be an attractive character and he dragged hard on his cigarettes. But you could hear a pin drop. He supplied an exaggerated spiritual framework to the political details of the laymen speakers.... The great sin was apathy.... This was only for Catholic anti-Communist thoroughbreds.” Speaking further on John Cotter recalls: “He created a night of breathless intensity. Martyrdom was in the air. People really did lean further and further

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<sup>1052</sup> *ibid.* p.84.

<sup>1053</sup> M. Sheehan, Letter to the author, June 6 2007, (ACA).

<sup>1054</sup> J. A. Noakes, *Frames of Protest: Social Movements & the Framing Perspective*, (Rowman & Littlefield: Lanham, 2005) p.17

forward in their seats. Absolute silence during his pauses.”<sup>1055</sup> Niall Brennan in his book *The Politics of Catholics*, also makes note that this zealous like anti-communism was not so much a product of Santamaria, but something already found in the culture at the time.<sup>1056</sup>

What many Catholics and non-Catholics opposed about the Movement was its tactics and in particular the tactic of permeation. Permeation involves individuals who would be trained to “participate in political and industrial life,” supported by the Movement, and would then penetrate or permeate an organisation for the Movement’s own ends. In sum, it mounted up as a taking over of an organisation.<sup>1057</sup> And it was the parish and churches that the Movement used in recruiting people for this work.

An example of permeation is found in Paul Ormonde’s book *The Movement* where he writes about the experience of his father, a Senator for the ALP in New South Wales, coming back from a Labor Branch meeting and saying that a group of boys from the local parish joined the branch; as Jim Ormonde went on to say “I tell you, they are trying to take over the party.”<sup>1058</sup>

Was Santamaria aware of and responsible for such tactics? The answer is yes and as an example, in the 1950s writing to Milani-Comparetti of Catholic Action in Italy, Santamaria asked for his guidance: “Is it really necessary to have specifically Catholic Trade Unions in a Catholic country?” He also asked: “Would it be possible to take over such a body by these methods?” And lastly, Santamaria asked: “Would it be possible for

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<sup>1055</sup> P. Deery, “Memories of the Movement: John Cotter, Catholic Action and The Early Cold War”, *The Hummer* Online Edition, Vol. 3., No.4 (<http://www.asslh.org.au/sydney/hummer/vol3no3/cotter.htm>).

<sup>1056</sup> Brennan, *op.cit.* pp.6-7.

<sup>1057</sup> Duncan, *op.cit.* p.190.

<sup>1058</sup> Ormonde, *op.cit.* p.34.

Catholics, instead of organising their own semi-confessional political party, to be trained to penetrate the non-Communist secular parties of the left and right, thus ensuring that the defeat of one party would not in essence be a defeat for the church.”<sup>1059</sup>

It was the Movement, along with the ALP-created Industrial groups, that was central in the Labor Party splits of 1955, when ALP federal leader Evatt accused the Movement of interference and undermining the ALP. But the existence of the Movement was further complicated when it became opposed by several Sydney bishops and, in turn, by Rome. The question was: was the Movement – as a Catholic body – directly interfering in politics?

The intervention from Rome was a shock to Santamaria. Until then, he had been watching the Italian situation where Catholic Action and Movements such as Gedda’s Civic Committee had mobilised Catholics to oppose Communism and to support the Christian Democratic Party, which had held power since the end of the Second World War. But in the Australian situation Rome was taking a different direction. When defending the Catholic Social Studies Movement’s right to interfere in direct political action, Santamaria argued that individuals who remained isolated were ineffective within the modern party political structure. Therefore, citing canon law, Santamaria argued that there was a place for the direct political action made by such voluntary lay organizations.<sup>1060</sup>

One of the bishops who opposed the Movement was Bishop James Carroll. Carroll had spent six years in Rome, where he would have seen Catholic Action being persecuted by

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<sup>1059</sup> B.A. Santamaria, letter to Milani-Comparetti, September 18 1953, cited in full in Morgan, *op.cit.* p.87.

<sup>1060</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “Religion and Politics: An Approach”, *20 Century*, Winter 1960, Vol.14. p.361.

the fascist regime.<sup>1061</sup> Yet, Catholic Action was heroic and was used by the Popular Party of Sturzo in its opposition to Fascism. It was the Vatican policy, which ultimately led to the demise of the Popular Party, which led to the rise of the fascists to totalitarian power. The approach of Carroll and the New South Wales bishops was overly clerical and integralist. The method used by them was in the “Irish tradition, beginning with Cardinal Cullen in the 1850s” in which there was “insistence on clerical authority and lay obedience....” as well as claims of the “bishop knew best...”<sup>1062</sup>

With the protest from the bishop, Rome instructed that the Movement have no direct political activity but rather concentrate on educating its members in the social teachings of the Church. Those on the Executive of the Movement reacted by resigning and beginning a new organization which, according to B.A. Santamaria, was a “purely civic body with no connection whatsoever with the Church, completely making its own decisions on its own responsibility.”<sup>1063</sup>

Was the new institution, the National Civic Council, modelled on an Italian model? According to John Barich: “Gedda’s *Comitati Civici Nazionali*, functions purely as boosters for the demo-Christian vote.... They do not have a role in the trade unions or attempt to leaven the whole political scene. *Comitati Civici Nazionali* literally translates as National Civic Committees, but the almost parallel choice of names by the council is claimed [by B.A. Santamaria himself] to be coincidental”<sup>1064</sup>. This is an interesting point brought out by Barich and the co-incidence is amazing, as is the similarity in structure. But Santamaria denied this Italian connection in 1968. At this time, suspicions of an Italian style Christian Democratic Movement would have been strongly opposed by the

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<sup>1061</sup> Brian Croke, “Prelates and Politics: The Carroll Style”, *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*. Vol. 22. 2001, p.40.

<sup>1062</sup> Patrick O’Farrell, *Vanished Kingdoms: Irish in Australia and New Zealand*’ (UNSW: Sydney, 2000) p. 278.

Australian psyche. Santamaria, right to the very end of his life, insisted that the name National Civic Council came from James McAuley.<sup>1065</sup>

B.A. Santamaria saw the Movement very much in the mould of Luigi Gedda's movement in Italy and recent published letters of Santamaria have demonstrated this. In 1951 Santamaria even went as far as arguing to Bishop O'Collins of Ballarat that the Movement would need to be restructured along the lines of Gedda's Civic Committees.<sup>1066</sup>

Bruce Duncan, on the other hand, makes the Gedda-Santamaria connection much stronger. According to Duncan, Santamaria looked to "Gedda's success and papal approval as indicating a new model of Catholic political involvement: one which shared much with his own views about the role of the Movement."<sup>1067</sup>

Santamaria, himself kept the Gedda connection away from the public eye, and it was only in 1988, in an article in *AD2000* entitled "Mannix and the Laity", that he introduced Luigi Gedda to his readers, long after Gedda's Italian movement had ceased to exist. According to B.A. Santamaria, "Catholic Action no longer had the élan which it had under Dr Luigi Gedda,"<sup>1068</sup> whose demise was due to the growing divisions within the Vatican, unlike the NCC who by shedding its "connexions with the church" was able to retain its own chosen role and constitution.<sup>1069</sup> Yet, not mentioned by Santamaria was the Movement's continued reliance on the Catholic Church for funding, venues to hold functions, and parishes for its recruits, using exclusion and guerrilla tactics against those

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<sup>1063</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.216.

<sup>1064</sup> Barich, *op.cit.* p.23.

<sup>1065</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview by Robin Hughes, *op.cit.*

<sup>1066</sup> B.A. Santamaria to J.P. O'Collins, February 16 1951, cited in full in Morgan, *op.cit.* p.39.

<sup>1067</sup> Duncan, *op.cit.* p.127.

<sup>1068</sup> B.A. Santamaria, "Mannix and the Laity: After 25 Years", November 1988, *AD2000*. p.4.



parish priests who opposed their expansion. This was noted at the time by Sydney

Cardinal Norman Gilroy, cited in Bruce Duncan's book *Crusade or Conspiracy*:

He [Gilroy] continued that although the NCC now declared itself 'no longer subject to Episcopal authority' or the 'authority' or the 'Vatican Instructions', it still 'appears to make a special claim' on the Church. In certain dioceses the Movement continued its activities in unions and political parties. In Melbourne, he reported, 'it is being established under the auspices of the Parish', and *News Weekly* was regarded as 'authorised in some way by the Church' and being "sold at Church doors....' To understand this stubborn refusal to accept even the clear directions of the Holy See, it is necessary to take into account a certain mentality of fanaticism which tends to justify any action in the name of opposing Communism; also, to consider... the disappointment at losing a position of great power in the Church and in civic life."<sup>1070</sup>

B.A. Santamaria, since his background was from the industrial suburb of Brunswick, disagreed with Rome's judgment and pressed ahead with the newly formed National Civic Council: "to face the unpredictable challenges of the sixties, seventies and the eighties."<sup>1071</sup>

After the National Civic Council was formed, Santamaria maintained close ties to Luigi Gedda. In the late 1960s, for example, Santamaria wrote to Gedda, suggesting a conference in Asia where upon its completion "a small coherent International Executive which will arrange future meetings... and the formation of an international training centre", where an international "elite" would be influential in their country of origin.<sup>1072</sup>

In the mid 1970s and 1980s Santamaria, no longer looked to the Italian migrants as a source of recruitment to the Movement. His international focus now became South East Asia. While on the home front he began to focus on issues related to the Church and

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<sup>1069</sup> *ibid*, p.5.

<sup>1070</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>1071</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.229.

<sup>1072</sup> B.A. Santamaria to Luigi Gedda, October 13 1967, cited in Morgan, *op.cit.* p.258.

family. In doing this he reorientated the focus of the Movement from what had been until then mainly focussed on the union movement. Santamaria recalled that it was “an extension of objectives”, citing the decline of the Roman Empire as a parallel for his motivation.<sup>1073</sup> Furthermore, when the Movement separated itself from the Church and after the death of Archbishop Daniel Mannix in 1963, it became accountable to no one. Its constitution was to become self-perpetuating, there only to protect its National President and his successor.<sup>1074</sup>

In the 1980s Santamaria continued the work of the Movement to the areas of religion and the family. But the Movement was B.A. Santamaria’s creation and keeping himself in control was fundamental to its existence. Gerard Henderson argues that this was the “cult of personality” which defined the Movement from the 1970s until B.A. Santamaria’s death in 1998. In September 1980, Santamaria removed any dissidents from the Movement, sacking five of its senior officials and tightening control of the organization, dispelling any notions that the Movement was ever democratic.

Remembering the 1980 schism, Santamaria spoke about it rarely. The episode is hardly mentioned in his writings and those whom he worked alongside in the Movement for many years were written out of his recollections. In 1997, in an interview with Robin Hughes - and only after he was pressed about the issue - Santamaria stated: “I thought that the union movement would decline in importance, and it has in fact... So that was that... and they left us. And it was a very bad blow to me.”<sup>1075</sup>

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<sup>1073</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview by Robin Hughes. op.cit.

<sup>1074</sup> C. Pearson, “Santamaria’s waning legacy”, *The Australian*, March 26 2006; see also Greg Roberts, “Divided Civic Councils to dump State chiefs”, *The Australian*, January 18 2006 (newspaper clippings).

<sup>1075</sup> B.A. Santamaria, Interview by Robin Hughes, op.cit.

The 1980 expulsion of many senior NCC members was a strange episode that does cast doubts on Santamaria and his approach to politics. Gerald Mercer, in his obituary many years later of John McKenna, writes of the means employed by B.A. Santamaria against those who left the Movement: "The newsletter came out each month, the range of contributors broadened and the circulation slowly rose. A few problems arose with no.19 in November 1982. The premises in which the work was being done were raided and occupied at 4am on Melbourne Cup Day. Security guards acting on behalf of B.A. Santamaria in the pursuance of a legal dispute."<sup>1076</sup> The security guards were one of many heavy-handed measures employed by Santamaria against those who left the Movement in the 1980s.

After the 1980's split, the Movement became more fanatical and more isolated. Everyone knew Santamaria but the rest of the personnel were virtually unknown. Patrick Morgan in his 1987 *Quadrant* article, made an interesting observation about B.A. Santamaria and the NCC: "in the past... analysis was directed towards puncturing the idiocy of the day in order to enlist people in organised (that is NCC based) activity against it. But in this book there is only one minor reference to the role of prophetic shock minorities."<sup>1077</sup>

Gerard Henderson, even as early as in the 1970s, tried to challenge - without any luck - the cult of personality: "I argued that an organization which had neither genuine elections nor free discussion simply could not receive and maintain an intelligent and articulate core membership... In short, I argued against the cult of personality."<sup>1078</sup>

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<sup>1076</sup> Gerald Mercer, "Obituary- John McKenna", *Social Action*, September 2005, p3.

<sup>1077</sup> Patrick Morgan, "Mr Santamaria and the Wolf", *Quadrant*, October 1987, p.15.

Internal staff memos can substantiate the NCC and B.A. Santamaria's "cult of personality". One issued in 1990 asked employees who worked in head office to smarten up as "the situation within the office has greatly deteriorated." The reason was that there was "too much talking and wandering around the office...". But where the memo turns for the worst is in the final paragraph: "This is not just a job: it is a cause. If there are any who no longer believe this, they will be unlikely to follow rules anyway. In that case it would be better for each individual to consider seriously whether he or she wishes to continue to work in this office...."<sup>1079</sup>

## THE AUSTRALIAN FAMILY ASSOCIATION

In the 1990s the Movement had several new fronts. The family front was something always central to B.A. Santamaria and in the 1990s the Australian Family Association was an important work of the Movement. B.A. Santamaria's daughter, Mary Helen Woods, was a core operative as well as Val Adami Jnr, son of B.A. Santamaria's friend Val Adami.

The Australian Family Association was to tackle the problems related to the life of the family. According to Santamaria: "The 'nuclear' family, our current Western family, diminished though it is in comparison with the 'extended' family of peasant societies, is nevertheless a highly complex and most efficient mechanism for administering those social services which have to be delivered by someone in every society, whether peasant

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<sup>1078</sup> G. Henderson, "B.A. Santamaria and the Cult of Personality", *Eureka Street Papers* (Jesuit Publications: Richmond, 1995), p.55.

<sup>1079</sup> B.A. Santamaria, "Staff Notice", January 11 1990, (NCC).

or capitalist or communist. I refer specifically to those related to the care of the very young and the very old.”<sup>1080</sup>

The aims of the AFA were:

To cultivate within society an appreciation that the integrity and wellbeing of the family is essential to the stability of the nation, to analyse law and policies that affected the family, and to support initiatives of other organizations that support the family<sup>1081</sup>

This, the AFA hoped, could be done by conferences and seminars as well as facilitating research.<sup>1082</sup> Some in the Australian Labor Party saw it as the “business of wrecking the women’s movement.”<sup>1083</sup>

Such an observation is true. The central core tenet of Santamaria and the *domus* was the role of women. Women were to be housewives and B.A. Santamaria in 1997 argued that this was the case in his household and he held this belief strongly: “...the woman is very much the ultimate authority in what I call matters of the domestic economy and raising of the family. And I really believe that the hand that rocks the cradle rules society. [Laughs] I remember hearing somebody a little while ago saying that ‘I am the master in my own home, as long as my wife let’s me be’, and that’s pretty well the truth, you know.”<sup>1084</sup>

So with the Australian Family Association Santamaria attempted to stem the tide of women in the workforce by introducing policy ideas like an allowance that would give mothers a choice to stay at home. This policy idea was known as the “Homemakers

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<sup>1080</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “The Breakdown of the Family” *Australian Family Association Bulletin*, Vol. 1, No.1. July 1980, p.20.

<sup>1081</sup> *The Australian Family Association*, Vol.1. No.1. July 1980, p.5

<sup>1082</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>1083</sup> R.W. Connell, “Men and Socialism” *Labor Essays 1982*, (ed) G. Evans & J. Reeves, (Drummond: Melbourne, 1982) p.55.

<sup>1084</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview by Robin Hughes, op.cit.

Allowance” and it was a crucial platform of the AFA. Santamaria found comfort in the French, who had initiated the model that Santamaria was to adopt for the AFA.

According to this policy, the parent staying at home to care for the children was to receive, at the time, a sum of \$130 a week from the Government. The French model, according to B.A. Santamaria, “proved that if there is political will, there is a political way.”<sup>1085</sup>

## **THE RELIGIOUS CRISIS- B.A. SANTAMARIA AND THE THOMAS MORE CENTRE AND AD2000**

In 1975, writing in *News Weekly*, B.A. Santamaria took on a pessimism that was contrary to his so-called Italian Catholicism. Santamaria feared, as he had feared with Communism, that it was all doom and gloom within the Catholic Church: “Humanly speaking, the Christian faith is apparently in terminal crisis.... This apparent disintegration is the product of a sickness called Modernism...”<sup>1086</sup>

*AD2000*, a religious journal, was published by the Thomas More Centre and by the 1990s it was the biggest independent religious journal. The Thomas More Centre had B.A. Santamaria’s brother, Dr Joe Santamaria, as a core operative while the university groups known as the Democratic Club had many of B.A. Santamaria’s grandchildren in key positions. With the death of B.A. Santamaria in 1998, many of the family operatives in the organisation distanced themselves from the institutions known as the Movement.

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<sup>1085</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “French Family Policy: A Model for Australia”, *News Weekly*, March 2 1988, p.18.

<sup>1086</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “The Crisis of Christianity”, *News Weekly*, April 2 1975, p.16.

The question arises, did B.A. Santamaria define the organizations he began or did the organizations at the end define him? According to Movement zealot, John Barich, it was very hard to distinguish B.A. Santamaria from the Movement: “One of the difficulties faced by the writer has been to differentiate statements of Santamaria and those of the Council. After some consideration, it was decided that they be taken as synonymous not only because of the difficulty of unravelling the two, but also because they would only differ in exceptional circumstances, due to the nature of the organization.”<sup>1087</sup>

Here we may find the answer in an argument used by French Philosopher Charles Montesquieu who argued that leaders mould institutions whereas later the institutions mould the leaders. According to Niall Brennan it was the organization that overwhelmed B.A. Santamaria and what existed in the Movement was: “... an amorphous mass of grumbling Irish Catholics looking around for a suitable enemy to punch. Does his brand of passionate urgency generate the response it would in Italy? Or does he become the force which keeps them going from bad to worse over a lengthening period?”<sup>1088</sup>

## **THE MOVEMENT POST B.A. SANTAMARIA- FURTHER TO THE RIGHT**

After his death, the Movement supported the Monarchy in the referendum on whether Australia should be a republic. Even the close friend of the Movement, Cardinal George Pell, then Archbishop, came out in support of the move towards a republic. Not so the Movement, they strongly told their supporters to support the Monarchy. The Movement

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<sup>1087</sup> Barich, *op.cit.* p.7.

<sup>1088</sup> Brennan, *op.cit.* p.16.

of Irish Catholics, who more than any other race had suffered under the crown, now were asked to support the Monarchy.

This position isolated many loyal Movement devotees; James Macken, former judge of the NSW industrial Court, wrote in the aftermath of the NCC's support for the Monarchy in the Republican debate: "For a large part of my life I have been involved with the paper.... I have sold *News Weekly* on the streets of Melbourne and Sydney, at the entrances to the Trades Hall in Melbourne and Sydney and have been physically attacked in the process. It has always been a fighting newspaper for the Irish-Catholic ethos of Australians.... Your editorial was published at a time when no reply could be printed to counter your thoroughly unbalanced views on the question of the Republic.... When I finished the editorial I was sad but relieved in a way that it was the last I would ever have to read."<sup>1089</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In all the organizations that Santamaria began there was an Italian flavour introduced and adapted to the Australian context. With the National Catholic Rural Movement, Santamaria used his Italian background as a basis to provide a vision for farmers and rural families. In doing this, he found an unlikely ally in someone with a similar positionality, second-generation Italian-American Luigi Ligutti. In Catholic Action, Santamaria recognised early the unsavoury ground for the Italian understanding and adapted it to the Australian context, always being guided by events unfolding in Italy.

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<sup>1089</sup> Jim Macken to the Editor, *News Weekly*, October 25, 1999. ACA.



The Movement even took much of its inspiration from the Italian Civic Communities who, like the Movement, were engaged in a fight against Communism.

It was after the 1960s, when the Italian examples became distant because of unfolding events in Australia that the Movement did develop and end up going further to the right. They moved way from the creative example of Europe and from relying on disenfranchised conservative forces in Australia that only shared a common concern, Communism.

Writing in 1991, Robert Murray asked and answered his own question: What has been the effect of the Movement and the National Civic Council on the Labor Movement? His answer: not much.<sup>1090</sup>

The NCC was born in 1958 and as argued by Rob Wise in 1982, the NCC - like its predecessor the CSSM - was “born out of the destruction of the Movement in the 1955 Labor Split. Living always with the smell of defeat and isolation.”<sup>1091</sup> The sad story is that with age, the Movement and its tactics became more extreme and lacked the creativity that it had in the earlier days. Had Santamaria successfully recruited Italian migrants into the Movement, the case would have been different.

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<sup>1090</sup> Robert Murray, “Sorting Out the Sound and Fury”, *Eureka Street*, August 1991, p.14.

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<sup>1091</sup> Rod Wise , “Schism in Santamaria Camp”, *The Weekend Review* , Friday October 29 1982, pp.36.

## CHAPTER 9:

### CONCLUSION - WHO WAS B.A. SANTAMARIA?

At the start of the thesis the question was asked: how would you describe B.A. Santamaria? The other questions asked were whether Santamaria was heavily influenced by his Italian background? was Santamaria our Italian-Australian hero? and did he endure setbacks as a result of his Italian-Australian background? This chapter and conclusion is an attempt to answer these questions. In answering these questions it offers several answers to the question: who was B.A. Santamaria?

This thesis argues that B.A. Santamaria was: a) A Christian Democrat in Australia, b) not our Italian Australian hero, c) but someone influenced by his Italian background; d) being a textbook second-generation Italian-Australian. This outline of B.A. Santamaria is summed up by the fact that at the end of the day, B.A. Santamaria had to confront social exclusion in various ways throughout his life.

So how do you present Santamaria, in light of this thesis? One such presentation is that Santamaria was a Christian Democrat of the European tradition. Michael Fogarty, in his book *Christian Democracy*, argues that the Christian Democrats' "ideal of a good society is... personalist." That is, a person is "not a tool of production, nor may he be reduced to a mere servant of society."<sup>1092</sup> Therefore "when freedom is unlimited, the advantage

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<sup>1092</sup> M. P. Fogarty, *Christian Democracy in Western Europe*, (University of Notre Dame: Notre Dame, 1957), p.28.

goes to the strongest” making the personalism of Christian Democracy distant from individualism and economic liberalism.<sup>1093</sup>

Of course, such an interpretation is not original but it has been misrepresented and misinterpreted. Some in promoting this European Christian democracy concept to Santamaria have wrongly interpreted it as being integralist. An integralist would have wanted society to return to a more authentic Catholic heritage, where Church and State would work in unity. But Santamaria was well aware that such a position was nonsensical because in Australia there was no such Catholic heritage. It was a point that Santamaria emphasised time and time again. There is no doubt that B.A. Santamaria was a devout Catholic. According to his friend Kieran Ryan, Santamaria’s “loyalty to the Church and to its central beliefs ... was the root of his existence.”<sup>1094</sup> But does his commitment to Catholicism and his ideas of Christian Democracy make him an integralist?

B.A. Santamaria’s understanding of politics was in the tradition of Christian Democracy of the European tradition, a tradition which according to Santamaria owed nothing to Marxism and was strongly anti-Marxist,<sup>1095</sup> it was a tradition, which also gave rise to the “greatest figures in the reconstruction of Europe after the holocaust of World War II.” These figures, according to Santamaria, were Konrad Adenauer and Alcide de Gasperi.<sup>1096</sup> It is in looking at these Christian Democrats that one finds many similarities to Santamaria. Like Santamaria these men were devout Catholics and strongly anti-communist, and as Paul Johnson argues in his book *Modern History* these men “revered

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<sup>1093</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>1094</sup> Ryan, op.cit.

<sup>1095</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “A Catholic Debt of Marxism II”, *Social Survey*, Vol. 34. No.6. July 1985, pp.168-169.

<sup>1096</sup> *Ibid.* p.169.

the family as the social unit... and believed the most important characteristic of organised society to be the rule of law, which must reflect Natural law...”<sup>1097</sup>

The problem that Santamaria faced with Christian Democracy was that it was not promoted outside of Europe. Christian Democratic Statesman Amintore Fanfani believed the “...absence of a truly Catholic conception of anti-capitalism from the 1960s onwards must be chalked up to a total failure of Catholic clergy and laity to articulate and understand the Social Doctrine of the Church, a Doctrine constituting – despite attempts to discredit the phrase – the third way that transcends the tyranny of the market and the state.”<sup>1098</sup> Santamaria clearly understood and observed Christian Democracy. But Christian Democracy was unfolding and creating its history at the same time that Santamaria was engaged in his work in Australia. It was only as late as 1985 could Santamaria conclude that “undoubtedly, there is deeply embedded in Catholicism, a long tradition of Christian Democracy to which apart from the invaluable contribution of the U.S. in the Marshall Plan, the post-war salvation of Western Europe is almost exclusively owed.”<sup>1099</sup>

There is no doubt that B.A. Santamaria attempted unsuccessfully to promote a programme of Christian Democracy based on the Italian and European models.

Although he denied that the DLP and a Centre party would succeed in Australia,<sup>1100</sup> his program included the following Christian Democratic Principles:<sup>1101</sup>

the right to life, the right to serve and worship God in public and private, the right to religious formation, the right to personal liberty under just law, the right to the equal protection of just law regardless of sex, nationality, colour or creed, the right to freedom of expression, the right to choose the state of life, married, single, lay or religious, the right

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<sup>1097</sup> Paul Johnson, *A History of the Modern World*, (Weidenfeld and Nicholson: London, 1983), p.577.

<sup>1098</sup> Preface: A. Fanfani, *Catholicism, Protestantism and Capitalism*, (I.H.S. Press: Norfolk, 2003), p.8.

<sup>1099</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “A Catholic Debt of Marxism II” *Social Survey*, Vol. 34. No.6. July 1985, p.172.

<sup>1100</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.249.

<sup>1101</sup> Principles taken from Fogarty, *op.cit.* pp.48-49.

to education, the right to petition government for the redress of grievances, the right to a nationality, the right to have access to the means of livelihood, by migration when necessary, the right of association and peaceful assembly, the right to work and choose one's occupation, the right to personal ownership, use and disposal of property subject to the right of others, the right to a living wage, the right to collective bargaining, the right to associate by industries and professions to obtain economic justice, the right to assistance from society, if necessary from the State, in distress of persons or family.

Santamaria himself always distanced himself, the DLP and even the Movement from European Christian Democracy. In 1960, for example, Santamaria argued that a “political party tied to a religious persuasion may be suitable in the Western European community. It isn't suitable in Australia.”<sup>1102</sup> Even in 1981, that position had not changed: “... I did not believe that the alternative objective – of attempting to build the DLP into a permanent party of the centre – was either possible or desirable.... For good or evil such a party was outside the Australian historical tradition....”<sup>1103</sup> Yet, he was always ready to sing the praises of the European Christian Democratic Movement. In fact, it could also be argued that no one in Australia praised the Christian Democratic Movement more than B.A. Santamaria.

Writing as early as 1953 Santamaria argued, “The Christian Democrats have been Europe's strength. At the end of the Second World War it was apparent that the whole of battered and war torn Europe would embrace the doctrines of the leftist. No social or political commentator doubted the fact for one moment. But the commentators and observers were wrong. Western Europe did not embrace Leftism, but Christian Democracy.”<sup>1104</sup>

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<sup>1102</sup> Santamaria, *Spotlight on Santamaria*, p.29.

<sup>1103</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.249.

<sup>1104</sup> *News Weekly*, October 21, 1953. p.9.

Santamaria remained one of the few Australian supporters of Christian Democracy. Although always citing Germany as the example, rather than Italy, Santamaria argued - and argued often - that the “Christian Democrats as against the free marketers, believe that the role of the State in the economy is fundamental, that the religious values and moral beliefs establish the parameters. In other words, you didn’t pursue free market ideas if they destroy the family.”<sup>1105</sup>

Others have made this conclusion about Santamaria. Celebrating 50 years of the Movement’s existence, the then bishop of Melbourne George Pell acknowledged: “we must look to the Christian Democrats of Western Europe for the closest parallels...”<sup>1106</sup> According to Pell: “it was the Christian Democrats who successfully resisted the French and Italian Communist parties... laid the foundations of European recovery... provided the basis of European unity.”<sup>1107</sup> Pell concluded the speech by stating that the Movement “proved that even in a society where political discourse is overwhelmingly secular, movements inspired by religious principles can play a significant role...”<sup>1108</sup>

After the fall of Communism in Europe with the removal of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the Communist Party of Australia dissolved. To Santamaria, the Movement who fought the Australian Communist Party had no intention of following this lead.<sup>1109</sup> Rather his organization returned to the pre-cold war focus: big business and free market ideologies. Even though Santamaria never saw the Democratic Labor Party as achieving the status of a Centre party in Australia - like the Christian Democrats in Italy and Germany<sup>1110</sup> he still believed in the Christian Democratic Movement. Towards the end of his life

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<sup>1105</sup> B.A. Santamaria, interview by Robin Hughes, op.cit.

<sup>1106</sup> “The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Movement”, *News Weekly*, October 26 1991, p.3.

<sup>1107</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>1108</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>1109</sup> B.A. Santamaria, *National Civic Council 1990 Lecture Series*, (Self-Published: Melbourne, 1990) p.1.

<sup>1110</sup> J. Pringle, *Have Pen: Will Travel*, (Chattos and Windus: London, 1973) p.118.

Santamaria did find this goal of a Christian Democratic Movement in Australia to be unachievable.<sup>1111</sup>

Nevertheless, before his death, B.A. Santamaria published an article entitled “The New Challenge” in which he grounded the Movement in the European Tradition, where it would have “one leg in the world of politics and the other in that of religion.” There was also the distinction between politics and religion, and this distinction was well known in the Christian Democratic tradition “but risky in Australia.”<sup>1112</sup>

Did B.A. Santamaria reflect and promote these values? There is no doubt that such values were taught and promoted by him, but the Movement Santamaria started adopted an entirely different approach. The Movement did not reflect Christian Democracy. Rather, because its formation and structure were aligned like the Communists, its operation was such that anyone who was a member of the Movement became a mere tool of the organisation with no individuality in the pursuit of anti-communism.

The Christian Democratic Movement had its origins in Europe and particularly in Italy and this was unattractive to the Australian Labor tradition built on what Ronald Conway argues are “traditional... dislike of absolutes...”<sup>1113</sup> It was for this reason that B.A. Santamaria promoted the idea and the concept without ever really attempting to start a Christian Democratic party in Australia and never supporting the Democratic Labor Party.

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<sup>1111</sup> B.A. Santamaria Interview by Robert Pascoe, *op.cit.*

<sup>1112</sup> B.A. Santamaria, “The New Challenge”, *News Weekly*, January 10 1998, p.3.

<sup>1113</sup> Conway, *op.cit.* p.208.



Patrick Morgan's letters have revealed that despite this, Santamaria still hoped for a third party, a party that would translate and import the best of these Christian Democratic traditions blended with the best in the Australian tradition. Strange as it may seem, Santamaria believed that the Country Party could be reformed into a quasi Christian Democratic party. The problem with this, however, was that the constituents associated with the Santamaria of the 1970s and 1980s and even into the 1990s were incompatible with the more progressive Christian Democratic model. If Santamaria had been successful in recruiting members of the Italian community into the Movement in the 1950s and 1960s, scope for the third party of the Christian Democratic tradition would have been possible. Why, because these Italian migrants would have been more receptive to those Christian Democratic ideals than the older Movement, grouper or unionist member.

Yet this was the major Santamaria weakness. This weakness was his inability to be open and transparent about his Christian Democratic ideals. To admit the virtues of the European tradition, to openly promote it, and argue that it was the third party for both old Australians and new Australians, Santamaria may have been successful with his third party plan. Furthermore, he had evidence to support his case, the evidence of what was happening in Europe. In the 1980s with multiculturalism the Christian Democratic party in a multicultural Australia may have worked. What did happen, on the other hand, was that Santamaria succumbed to his critics and instead left the centre party position to be a leader of a rabble of disgruntled extremists, beginning with the Movement and the National Civic Council.

There is also the notion to consider that B.A. Santamaria may have been our modern Italian-Australian hero. Italian-Australians need a modern historical cultural hero. This

position remains vacant and at times I have wondered if Santamaria is a worthy candidate for the position. Recently, the Italian Catholic Bishops Conference requested some information about B.A. Santamaria hoping that he could be used as a model for Italian Catholic migrants in Australia. On reflection, the idea of him being an Italian-Australian historical hero and the Italian Catholic migrant hero, I would say no. The reason is that Santamaria did what he could to achieve his political goals and this meant a distancing from - and at times an outright denial - of his Italian background, even if he was caught up in the social exclusion of the times. Santamaria did not display hero qualities when it came to his own Italian background.

Even if B.A. Santamaria was a “stubborn advocate of the virtues of Italian migrants”, he was also cautious in underlining his own ancestry.<sup>1114</sup> The cautious nature of admitting to being an Italian, and the guilt associated with it is a common Italian Australian problem. It’s a phenomena faced by second-generation Italian-Australians.<sup>1115</sup> Heroes can rise above this problem and tackle it head-on. Heroes are bold. B.A. Santamaria was a bold and uncompromising Catholic, but he wasn’t bold when it came to his Italian background. Rather than being bold, and hence a hero, Santamaria played down his background and like a lot of us he suffered from the insecurity of being an outsider. Therefore, as stated by his son Paul Santamaria “it is true that the essence of his being was Italian.... But I think it would be a mistake to think that he yearned for Italy.”<sup>1116</sup>

So I conclude that Santamaria wasn’t an Italian-Australian hero. The argument presented at the start of the thesis was that a hero was needed to combat the usual negative

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<sup>1114</sup> Bosworth, *op.cit.* p.47

<sup>1115</sup> For examples see: Gwenda Tavan in Conversation with J.V. D’Cruz, *Overland*, 180, Spring 2005, p.19; E. Thompspon *Fair Enough, Egalitarianism in Australia* (UNSW Press: Sydney, 1994) Pp. 73-79; J Beaant and R. Watts, *Sociology Australia* (Allen and Unwin: St Leonards, 2002) p.240; Robert Pascoe’s chapter “Growing Up” demonstrates with many examples the challenge of growing up as an Italian-Australian: *Buongiorno Australia* (Greenhouse Publications: Richmond, 1987) Pp. 186-196.

stereotyping of Italians in Australia. The author used a quote from film producer Rosa Colosimo, who states that Italians in the media have been shown with the usual stereotypes: “the husband is a fruiterer called Luigi or Giuseppe, and is stupid, possessive and suspicious. The wife is fat, dressed in black, with no make-up, and is called Maria or Concetta. The sons have little intelligence but their parents want them to become doctors or lawyers, while the daughters are absolute geniuses who their parents do not understand in their insistence that the woman’s place is in the home, preferably in the kitchen....”<sup>1117</sup> Furthermore, as another example, Elaine Thompson writing about the Italian influence in the canfields in North Queensland states: “... Australian theatre still awaits the Italian-Australian equivalent of the Doll where the heroes are Rocco and Bernardo and the Australian legend is acted out in broken English.”<sup>1118</sup> Santamaria did nothing to combat these negative images, which were more prominent in a multicultural Australia towards the end of Santamaria’s life. . The paradox of that quote is startling. Santamaria’s father was a fruiterer. His name was Giuseppe. But he wasn’t stupid and there is no evidence of him being possessive or suspicious. His sons also had plenty of intelligence. We know of B.A. Santamaria’s achievements, but all the sons became successful contributors, one a doctor, one an accountant, and the others very successful businessmen. And yes, Josephine was highly intelligent. But the last line of the quote is certainly true of B.A.Santamaria: “the woman’s place is in the home...”.

Santamaria certainly began his life with an Italian background. If you strip him down to what Harold Isaacs calls his “basic group identity” then Santamaria was a mixture of an

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<sup>1116</sup> P. Santamaria, Letter to the Author, August 16 2006, (ACA).

<sup>1117</sup> Andrew Jakubowicz (ed), *Racism, Ethnicity and the Media*, (Allen and Unwin: St. Leonards, 1994), p.114.

<sup>1118</sup> Thompson, *op.cit.* p. 78.

Australian and Southern Italian culture and descent: “The baby acquires a name” and he “acquires the history and origin of the group into which he is born.”<sup>1119</sup>

Santamaria’s life, however, was a steady drift away from the *domus* and his basic group identity. The more he lived, the more distinct he became. Was this typical of Australians of an Italian descent and culture? Other examples may shed more light on this point.

Kate Samperi was for many years the person behind the pen of the household phrase “Dear Kate” that appeared in the *Woman’s Day* magazine. Her daughter, Angela Rossmanith, writing about her Italian-Australian background, talks about being a Second Generation Australian of an Italian background: “there was a time when we felt ashamed to be Italian. In public, I felt I had to conceal myself, a ploy that became second nature and persisted for longer than I would have liked. The idea, so I believed, was to allow few clues to escape that might reveal an essential identity...”<sup>1120</sup>

The Samperi experience can be seen as a universal experience of Italians living in Australia. As regards the problem of exclusion, the Italian community, particularly those in public life had to fit in and assimilate. An example of this is Kate Samperi’s experience as explained by her daughter Angela Rossmanith: “Mum was particularly keen to hide her origins, our origins. She wanted her children to be accepted, she said, and not to experience the rejection and ridicule she had been exposed to.”<sup>1121</sup> The irony of the Samperi story was that a copy was sent to B.A. Santamaria, perhaps as a sign of solidarity.

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<sup>1119</sup> Harold R. Isaac, “Basic Group Identity: The Idols of the Tribe” in *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, edited by N. Glazer and D. P. Moynihan, (Harvard University Press: Harvard, 1975), p.31.

<sup>1120</sup> Kate Samperi, *Silken Cords: Beyond Dear Kate*, (Random House: Sydney, 1999), p.137.

Oswald Bonutto, a naturalized Australian of an Italian background, was interned during the war, as he later recounted in his book *A Migrant Story*, published in 1963. It was a challenging book for a nation which still saw itself as a part of the British Empire and as a nation where migrants, especially Italians, were to be assimilated. Bonutto's book, nevertheless, did challenge the motivation behind the policy of internment. Yet, this was 1962 and Bonutto was of an Italian background, therefore and so with Santamaria, some form of compensation was required as extra proof of loyalty. Bonutto's extra proof was his epilogue chapter in his book his "final word to Italian migrants who have or who are coming to Australia..." In his pep talk to Italian migrants, Bonutto wrote: "we must learn to think as Australians and be proud..." and Italians had to "quickly merge into the general pattern of Australian Nationhood."<sup>1122</sup> And for those "who are slow in getting Australianised", Bonutto strongly rebuked them calling them "unconcerned slackers".<sup>1123</sup> Bonutto's second edition appeared after his death in 1994. Gone in this edition was the final word to Italian migrants. And Oswald Bonutto was now italianised and published as Osvaldo Bonutto.<sup>1124</sup>

Another example is Gwenda Tavan, who also experienced social exclusion in more recent times and who argues that a result of racism was an: "insecurity, difference, marginality and restlessness as well as a deep seated need to belong."<sup>1125</sup> This notion mixed with the complexity of being a second-generation Italian Australian, further complicates B.A. Santamaria's cultural identity and understanding. The reason for using these three examples, is because they have stated this problem in writing. Italian-Australians have largely not written of this problem and Santamaria is one such example.

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<sup>1121</sup> *ibid.* p.138

<sup>1122</sup> Oswald Bonutto, *A Migrant's Story*, (H. Pole and Co: Brisbane, 1963), p.139.

<sup>1123</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>1124</sup> Osvaldo Bonutto, *A Migrant's Story: The Struggle and Success of an Italian-Australian 1920-1960*, (University of Queensland Press: St. Lucia, 1994).

<sup>1125</sup> Gwenda Tavan in Conversation with J.V. D'Cruz, *Overland*, 180, Spring 2005, p.19.

It could be argued therefore that B.A. Santamaria was a textbook second-generation Italian-Australian. Yet he was a second-generation Italian-Australian long before the mass migration of Italian migrants that occurred in the 1950s and 1960s.

Ien Ang argued, by citing Salman Rushdie, that the “effects of mass migration have been the creation of radically new types of human beings: people who root themselves in ideas rather than in places.”<sup>1126</sup> In her doctoral study Deborah Jean Kasnitz found, among the second-generation Italian-Australians an “ambivalence” was at the heart of the immigrant, both first generation and second.<sup>1127</sup> It is true in the above instances that Santamaria’s notion of being Italian was an abstract idea. As he recounted in an interview in 1987, when asked the question: How do you feel about Italy? “Last night I saw a film. We had some visitors and we showed them this film. I don't think any of them liked it as much as I did, but I've seen it umpteen times. It's called *Avanti* and it's got Jack Lemmon in it. And I can't tell you the plot, it doesn't matter. But one of the characters says, 'Italy is not so much a country as an emotion'. That's what I feel about it.”<sup>1128</sup>

But when the cultural Tuscany region and the industrial North of Italy was seen more positively in the eyes of the world, unlike the poor South<sup>1129</sup>, Santamaria identified his Italian background with that of the more acceptable Tuscan and Northern parts rather than his true origins, that of the South.

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<sup>1126</sup> Ien Ang, “Migration of Chineseness: Ethnicity in the Post-Modern World”, *Mots Pluriels*, No.7. 1998, online edition.

<sup>1127</sup> Deborah Jean Kasnitz, “Worker Gender and Health Among Southern Italian Immigrants in Melbourne Australia”, University of Michigan, 1981, p.8.

<sup>1128</sup> Santamaria, interview by Robin Hughes, op.cit.

<sup>1129</sup> Laurino, *op.cit.* p.94.

Stephen Castles and Mark Miller write, in *The Age of Migration*, that migration and settlement “is a long drawn out process, which will be played out for the rest of the migrant’s life, and the subsequent generation...”<sup>1130</sup> In the case of Giuseppe Santamaria, migration and settlement was a long drawn out process and it did play out in the public life of B.A. Santamaria. Sydney philosopher James Franklin is correct to argue that Australian was not the ideal place for his ideas based on his Italian and Catholic background.<sup>1131</sup>

For B.A. Santamaria, his insecurity in being of an Italian background was manifested in a number of ways. This was done by trying not to draw attention to his Italian background as well as ensuring his own children had a somewhat more established background. He made distinctions between himself and the culture of his parents. In 1934 for example he writes about the Italian in the third person “they [Italians] are usually silent, feeling that as they themselves are despised...”<sup>1132</sup> In 1981, in a more culturally tolerant Australia, B.A. Santamaria wrote in the first person “We learnt to take the appellation ‘dagoes’ and not to challenge the superiority of our white Anglo-Saxon (or Catholic) tormentors, there were too many of them.”<sup>1133</sup>

B.A. Santamaria lived and worked within the framework of an Australian understanding of citizenship as being “constructed with racist boundaries”.<sup>1134</sup> It was in this context that Santamaria presented his ideas. Having an Italian background with the boundaries of racial exclusivity, present at the time in Australia, added to the difficulty in promoting his ideas to the Australian public. His ideas may have been unpopular, but add to this his

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<sup>1130</sup> S. Castles and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration- International Population Movements in the Modern World*, (Guilford Press: London, 1993), p.18.

<sup>1131</sup> J. Franklin, “Santamaria: The Politics of Fear”, *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, Vol. 22. 2001, p.82.

<sup>1132</sup> Santamaria, “Italy Changes its Shirts”, p.3.

<sup>1133</sup> Santamaria, *Against the Tide*, p.5.

<sup>1134</sup> David Dutton, *One of Us: A Century of Australian Citizenship*, (UNSW: Sydney 2002), p.151.

Catholic background and then add his Italian background and one sees the difficulties he faced in promoting his ideas. At the end of the day B.A. Santamaria was a person of an Italian background who spoke on political issues to a society whose ideas of nationhood would have regarded him as an outsider.

To his credit, nevertheless, B.A. Santamaria's ideas were broader, they were European ideas<sup>1135</sup> as distinct from the predominantly British ideas and in many respects he may have been influenced by Fr Modotti, his own father and even Denys Jackson who also strongly promoted European ideas<sup>1136</sup>. When it came to immigration Santamaria once again spoke generally of Europeans migrating rather than having the prevailing attitude of assisting Britons<sup>1137</sup>. This was a fundamental difference to Arthur Calwell who looked to the British because "Australia has a predominantly British ancestry..."<sup>1138</sup> Of course, Calwell at the end of the day became a friend and proponent of European migrants, including Southern Italians. But as argued by Pringle, B.A. Santamaria was "the first Australian of non-British origin to exert a powerful influence in politics..."<sup>1139</sup>

What if Santamaria had begun his career in the 1980s? The outcome may have been different. Catholics then were no longer the minority that threatened the Protestant establishment. And the name Santamaria, with all its Mediterranean overtones would not stand out as it did in the 1950s. It would be commonplace in a multicultural Australia. In today's political climate the Santamaria name would fit nicely into the concept of being "one of us."

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<sup>1135</sup> *Rural Life*, June 1959, p.53.

<sup>1136</sup> D.G.M. Jackson, "The Radical Tradition of Australian Catholicism", *Twentieth Century*, Vol.3. No.1. 1948, p.16.

<sup>1137</sup> *Freedom*, December 11 1943, p.1.

<sup>1138</sup> A.A. Calwell, "Population: Australia's Biggest Deficit, *Twentieth Century*, Vol.3. No.1. 1948, p.16.

<sup>1139</sup> Pringle, *op.cit.* p.95.



In the 1980s, when Santamaria and the Movement were still engaged in battles of yesterday, the opportunity came for both to move into a new multicultural Australia. Santamaria had been there throughout the turbulence of the 1950s, and was the right ambassador for the emerging new Australia. Yet, Santamaria chose otherwise. In the Catholic Church, however, Santamaria did make a bold statement. When there was talk of an Australian church, distinct from Rome, Santamaria strongly advocated that religion came from Rome. It was his commitment to the Church of Rome that attracted his friend George Pell, who perceived the Australian Church as being symbolized by Santamaria and Mannix: “The partnership between Irish Australian Archbishop and the Italian-Australian layman, 50 years his junior is remarkable. Due to the post-war migration, it is also a symbol for the new Australian church....”<sup>1140</sup>

Santamaria was a Christian Democrat, albeit a careful one. Santamaria wasn't our Italian hero, although he did import into his thinking values and ideas that were born out of a lived experience of his background. At the end of the day, the Movement that he created was an organization that he created in his own image. That image was no longer important or relevant to a multicultural society in which Santamaria could have succeeded with his European ideas.

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<sup>1140</sup> George Pell, “The Mannix Story told and told well”, *The Advocate*, November 15 1984, p.14.



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