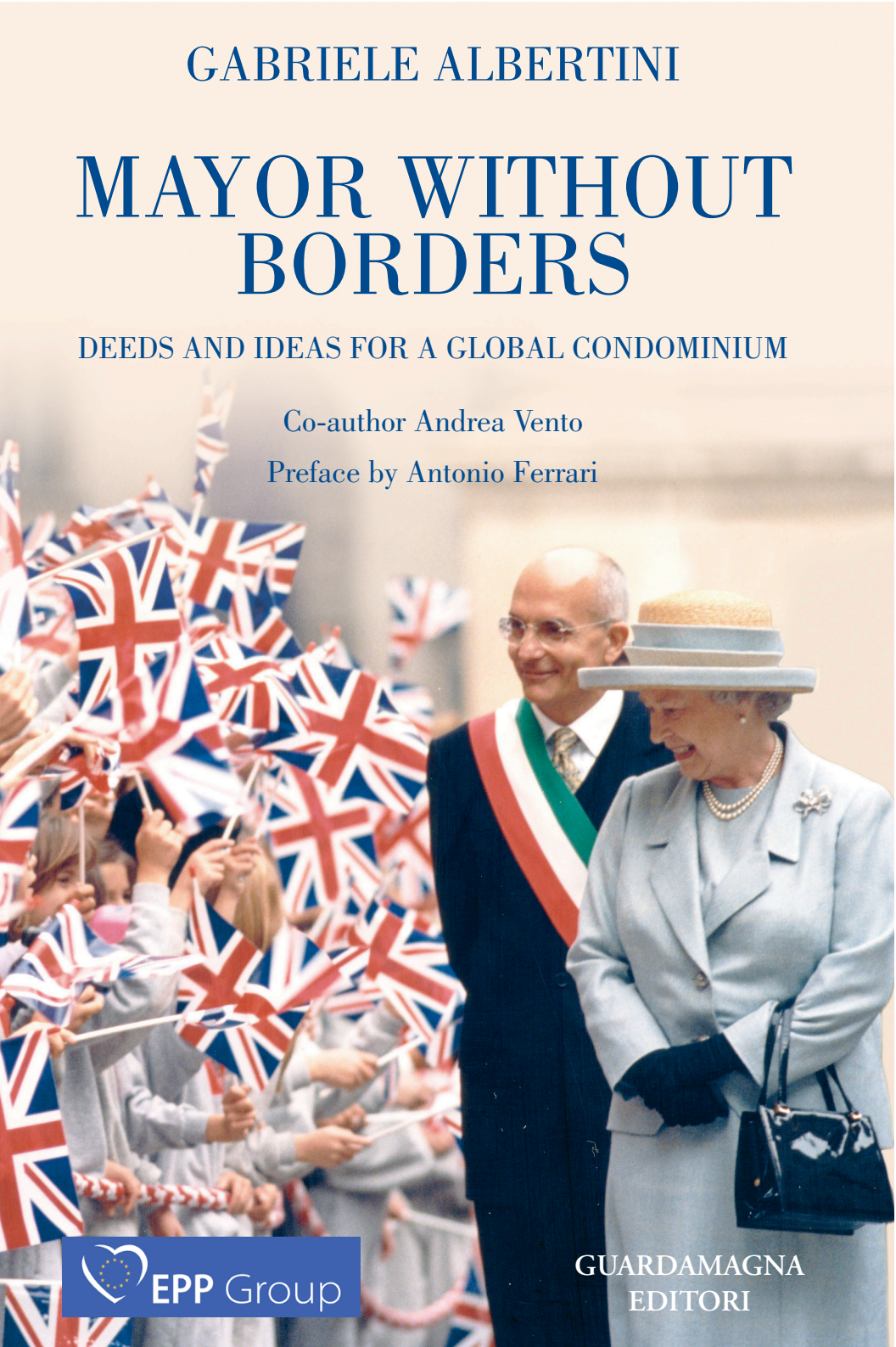
GABRIELE ALBERTINI

MAYOR WITHOUT BORDERS

DEEDS AND IDEAS FOR A GLOBAL CONDOMINIUM

Co-author Andrea Vento

Preface by Antonio Ferrari



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Totus mundus notra habitatio fit
Jeronimo Nadal

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Preface

"Character is destiny". This observation by Heraclitus, often ignored or forgotten but nonetheless true, always and for everyone, is useful when describing exceptional individuals whose very character causes them to have an impact on the world around them that goes beyond the role that life or fortune has chosen for them.

One such individual is surely the former mayor of Milan and current member of the European Parliament, Gabriele Albertini. A businessman-cum-politician, he doesn't have much of the businessman in him, insofar as it is not in his nature to combine his iron determination with the cynicism of the business world. He has even less of the politician in him, for he is anything but a cold calculator and is incapable of dissimulation. If he is pleased, worried or furious, you can read it in his eyes – but that isn't even necessary, for before you can do so, he will have already volunteered an explanation as to the state of his soul.

After getting to know him, spending time with him and becoming his friend, I think I can claim to understand – and obviously share – what Indro Montanelli[1] said and wrote about Albertini. The great journalist was struck not only by Albertini's ability and enthusiasm, but by his proud determination to preserve his own autonomy of judgment, despite adhering

to a specific political movement and being a loyal admirer of its leader, Silvio Berlusconi. Montanelli also praised the extraordinary interpersonal gifts of the former mayor, which enabled him to grasp the human details that typically either elude public figures or are deliberately dismissed as marginal. This quality also encouraged the important leader with whom he was interacting at any given moment to open up, thanks to the atmosphere that Albertini is uniquely able to create: to lower the social mask that nearly everyone wears, particularly those in positions of power.

I had a chance to witness this first hand during several meetings with international leaders that Milan's first citizen held during his nine years in office – encounters that are collected and elaborated upon in this book, written in collaboration with Andrea Vento in the form of an interview. It is precisely in this dimension, far from the trappings and temptations of Italian politics, whether local or national, that the former mayor was able to skilfully forge friendships that have since become a veritable treasure for the city and its current administrators.

With Queen Rania of Jordan, who, as a modern and liberal woman, often suffers the restrictive protocols she is obligated to maintain, Albertini established a deep and abiding friendship. If Her Majesty continues to acknowledge this special relationship with Milan, it is largely thanks to Albertini. Not just because of the special attention he showed to her (an 'Ambrogino d'Oro' and honorary citizenship), but for his ability to engage her with gentle frankness and encourage her to do the same, to spare her the burden of ritualised communication. A telling episode took place outside Palazzo Marino, where a group of photographers were shouting her name to get a sellable spontaneous shot, as if she were an actress or supermodel[2].

Mayor Albertini scolded them sharply, reminding them that they were not in the presence of a pop star but of a queen. His indignant and respectful protectiveness earned him an affectionate smile from Her Majesty.

During a visit from Ehud Olmert, then mayor of Jerusalem and later head of the Israeli government, I was invited to join the two men in the mayor's office, where I witnessed a lively exchange. Albertini was informing Olmert that a prominent Milanese citizen, of whom the city was quite proud, one of the great leaders of the Catholic Church, Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini[3], had recently gone to live in Olmert's Jerusalem. The future prime minister of Israel, who hadn't yet acquired the necessary diplomatic aplomb, responded in an almost disdainful way, "If you only knew how many bishops and priests we have in Jerusalem!". Albertini's response was such that Olmert quickly adjusted his attitude and his words, and the two became friends.

In 2006, during a trip through the Holy Land, Albertini met with three heads of state (King Abdullah II in Amman, Abu Mazen in Ramallah, and Moshe Katsav in Jerusalem) and another who would soon after win the Nobel Peace Prize, Shimon Peres, all in the course of four days. If that isn't a some kind of record for a mayor, it should be! At the very least, it is a testament not only to the importance of Milan, but to the intrepid personality of its mayor. That trip was also marked by an episode that threatened to turn into a diplomatic incident. It was the eve of the Israeli elections, and the Labour Party was counting on the support of the Palestinian president. However, Abu Mazen, who was receiving the mayor that day in Ramallah, felt himself so at ease in that Albertinian atmosphere of contagious confidentiality that he openly confessed to hoping

that Olmert, head of the centrist Kadima party founded by Ariel Sharon, would emerge as victor. I remember turning to another of those present, Janiki Cingoli, director of the Italian Centre for Middle Eastern Peace, with an involuntary expression of shock, both of us trying to imagine the consequences should such a statement should leave the room.

It should not come as a surprise that Albertini was treated like a head of state by Vladimir Putin, who had always shown a keen interest in Milan from the earliest days of his rule of a Russia that had just recently abandoned communism. Nor should it be surprising that Albertini created a current of sympathy with then President of the United States Bill Clinton and with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl. The milanese mayor's ability to instantly tune into the psychology of his interlocutor cannot be considered anything but an innate feature of his character, combined with his voracious curiosity, heritage of his Jesuit education. He remains fascinated by the political and human saga of Lawrence of Arabia, and is always ready to abandon himself to some boyhood passion or other, unafraid of provoking others.

Consider the time he met Cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran[4], supremely refined intellectual and diplomat, and threw himself into a discussion of questionable appropriateness, arguing that it had become necessary to convince prostitutes to leave the streets and reopen what used to be known as 'houses of assignation'. And he did so by citing an example that could have seemed sacrilege, and was therefore potentially doubly embarrassing, pointing out that during the Church's reign as a state with temporal powers, there were numerous brothels within earshot of St. Peter's. His intention was to demonstrate that, back then, the Church had known how to deal with undeni-

ably secular problems. Albertini confesses in the book that he feared he'd made a huge gaffe. But the modern and open-minded Cardinal Tauran chose not to let embarrassment prevail, because he recognised that he was dealing with an honest and authentic man.

It is precisely this sincerity, in addition to many shared values, that cemented the friendship between Albertini and Cardinal Martini, two personalities that appear very different. It's difficult to picture a friendship between the solemn prince of the Church, whose every word carries the weight of his authority, and the spontaneous, sometimes explosive former mayor, who loves art, music and makes no apologies for frequently doubting the teachings of the Church and his own faith.

I was struck by the advice Albertini received from Cardinal Martini immediately after his first election victory, and which he cites in this book: "He urged me to enjoy this moment of victory and electoral consensus, with my staff motivated by the exciting challenge of governing Italy's second largest city, but also to prepare for the criticism and the jealousy that would soon arrive. He told me I would suffer for my position, that from what he was able to see in me, I wasn't the sort of man who could adapt to ethically compromising situations without resentment; that I was a man who believed unambiguously in what he thought, a man who did what he said. An outlook not necessarily compatible with a world of roles and appearances. For these reasons, he told me, he wasn't entirely sure that the job I had taken was suited to someone like me."

A profound and exceptionally well-aimed observation. This is why the people and the encounters described in this book are so brightly coloured, and sometimes highlighted by a certain ingenuity (thank you, Pascoli[5] – you were right when you said

that we should protect the child within each of us, no exceptions!).

Talking about himself one day, Albertini said, a bit coyly, that once he left the mayor's office, at the very worst he would be remembered as a good 'apartment building manager'. He either didn't imagine, or perhaps knew all too well, that this self-deprecatory statement would be used against him to diminish the importance of his job and his achievements.

Nevertheless, the legacy of this anomalous mayor, who loves to collect public honours and knighthoods of every stripe, is important; it is concrete, and it will endure. Of all his collections, though, the most valuable is also the most ineffable, and that is the number of people whose fundamental humanity he was able to perceive and appreciate.

Antonio Ferrari
Special Correspondent for the *Corriere della Sera*

[1] Indro Montanelli (22 April 1909 – 22 July 2001) was an Italian journalist and historian, known for his new approach to writing history, exemplified in *History of the Greeks* and *History of Rome*. Unanimously considered the greatest Italian journalist of the 20th century.

[2] The *Ambrogino d'Oro* (golden coin depicting Saint Ambrose) is the most important honour the City of Milan can bestow. Palazzo Marino is the seat of the City Council of Milan.

[3] Carlo Maria Martini, SJ (born 15 February 1927) is an Italian cardinal of the Catholic Church. He was Archbishop of Milan from 1980 to 2002.

[4] Jean-Louis Pierre Tauran (born 3 April 1943) is a French cardinal of the Catholic Church. Former secretary for relations with States, he currently serves as president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in the Roman Curia.

[5] Giovanni Pascoli (31 December 1855 – 6 April 1912) was an Italian poet.

Chapter I

Wherein itis recounted a curious contest between titans, the counsel of the gnomes and a hammer at the White House

You've said that your first 'magic moment' on the international scene was 15 May 1998, in Birmingham's City Council House for the G8 summit. Why?

Because of a gracious introduction made by my friend and colleague Petra Roth, mayor of Frankfurt, who I'd got to know over the course of the frequent meetings held in those days with the mayors of Milan's sister cities at the city council residence of Highbury Hall. The sister cities are the economic capitals or 'second cities' of the G8 member countries. We had made friends and Roth introduced me to Helmut Kohl. I didn't understand German, but the then Chancellor's eyes and body language conveyed his meaning clearly. Switching to an English as tenuous as mine, which I therefore understood perfectly, Kohl started talking about Italy's future participation in the single European currency, which was still up in the air, the doubts coming largely from the deutschemark zone.

Around the same time, I also met Hans-Olaf Henkel, president of the BDI, the German employers' federation and counterpart to Italy's Confindustria[6]. Henkel was one of the key figures behind the benediction given by the German political and business establishment to Italy's entry into the eurozone,

despite the reservations of the financial community. Standing before the skeptical assembly of German legislators, Kohl praised Milan and Lombardy as one of the most dynamic regions on earth in terms of the production of wealth, thanks to the creativity of its industrial districts – that is, not just its principle hubs and their immediate sub-industries, but the entire capillary network of related businesses. Kohl understood this typically Italian system, whose main features are dynamism and entrepreneurial ability. One could say that Milan, Lombardy and by extension the entire north-east, in economic terms, had put into practice the exhortations of Carlo Cattaneo, who spoke from the balcony of Palazzo Marino during the epic 'Cinque Giornate'. He saw in federalism the most favourable conditions for maximising the potential of the greatest nations and the smallest villages, whereby the colossi of finance, industry, commerce and technology work together on a large scale while at the same making the most of the resources provided by the small business owner, the family, the individual – a system for which creative and organisational skills are fundamental. And that's how our delightful first encounter concluded. Kohl is a giant, and not just politically – I had never imagined him to be so physically immense, with that massive hand that shook my own so warmly. His praise made me feel as proud as a peacock.

Soon thereafter I had an experience that made me wonder if I was dreaming or hallucinating. I felt as if I were watching a clone of myself from a distance, barely believing my eyes when Richard Daley, mayor of Chicago, sister city of Milan, introduced me to Bill Clinton. The President of the United States of America communicated an instant sense of camaraderie when he placed his hand on my shoulder – the same hand that

had only to press a button to unleash global thermonuclear war – and said, "I love Milan". He then told me why: the fashion, La Scala, the dynamism of the region. If I remember correctly, he also mentioned he had visited Milan as a student, and had seen Leonardo da Vinci's *Last Supper*. While Clinton sang the praises of Milan, his wife Hillary entered the conversation, seconding her husband's appreciation for Milanese fashion and opera. When Mr. Kohl joined our little circle, I had the opportunity to witness an exchange that bordered on aggression between the titans of the two largest economies of the western world. Adding to the impression of enormity was the fact that both men are physically imposing – Clinton, while less robust than Kohl, matched him in height. And there I was, standing between them, a bit intimidated not only by matters of physical scale and circumstance, but also because I'd been mayor of Milan for just a year. In fact, in a coincidence that seemed almost destined, that very day marked the first anniversary of my having taken the oath of office, on 15 May 1997, when I officially assumed the duties of Milan's first citizen. These were Kohl's exact words, in English: "This is the chief of Milan, a very good friend of our Mayor Roth of Frankfurt." He then told the Clintons what he'd said earlier to me, that our region was one of dynamism and development in every field, from wealth production to technological research, adding that it represented a new frontier of modern society with regard to the integration of immigrants. In short, a spark of specifically European modernity, which Kohl naturally saw from a viewpoint that I would call 'European nationalism'. At this point my surprise turned into enthusiasm, the etymology of which is the Greek word *eintheos*, meaning the participation of the divine in our mortal souls, or how we project those souls onto the

concept of the divine: infinite, eternal, the absolute good, and so forth. By now my enthusiasm bordered on delirium, as the contest between Clinton and Kohl over who could applaud Milan more loudly reached a curious intensity. Clinton had in fact lauded the industrial districts of Milan and Lombardy with the same adjectives, the same reasoning, the same knowledge deployed by Kohl, and he considered what was being done here in Europe an example to follow, a model in which to believe. Naturally, Clinton's position was somewhat protectionist, insofar as it was his job to defend the interests of the United States from the possibility of Europe becoming an antagonist on the global chessboard. He was speaking not only about Germany, but of a certain other European country, at the time not fully recognised as an industrial power. As a representative of that certain other country, to find myself in the middle of this altercation between figures of such stature left me all but speechless.

Considering the solidity of our economy, both in Lombardy and nationally, do you think in retrospect that Kohl was right to champion Italy's participation in the single European currency?

It's a good question. Looking back, I can say that I agreed with the goal, the strategic approach that Kohl was promoting at the time. I believe that it should have been our objective as a nation, and it was. The assertion you made in your question is true, and echoes Kohl's argument that Europe couldn't leave out a country with Italy's economic characteristics. Even now, despite everything that is said, we still have the sixth largest economy in the G8. Perhaps even the fifth, if we take into account the so-called 'submerged' economic activity that doesn't

show up in the GDP and which may be proportionally even larger in central and southern Italy and the islands than the more structured, mature and modern system of central-northern Italy, particularly the area known as the Padania. I think that if we included those numbers, we would surpass other countries where the fiscal and legal relationships between society and the state are similar to those of northern Italy. So, the goal was the right one. As for the process, there should have been a more cautious attitude on the part of the government in achieving that goal, a more moderate or regulated pace. For example, unlike the Germans, we didn't have cents. One lira was of negligible value. Now we walk around with 50-cent coins in our pockets that are worth 1,000 lire, yet they have the same dimensions and appearance as the old 20 lire piece, which was worth barely one cent. According to several studies, the fact that there is no one-euro bill, along with the introduction of cents, had a heavy impact. From one day to the next people went from dealing with coins that were worth practically nothing to coins that were worth thousands of lire, yet unconsciously they remained 'pocket change'. I remember a conference where Giulio Tremonti pointed out that, according to a study by the Treasury, the average Italian unwittingly threw away two euros a day due to simple errors in calculation. That's 60 euros a month, equivalent to 10 per cent of the minimum pension. Furthermore, the fact that the euro was perceived as corresponding not to its real value of 1,936.27 lire but to the more manageable figure of 1,000 lire dramatically cut into the individual's buying power and therefore into consumption, investment and so on.

Returning to the euro and Europe, I dwelled on the question of the individual citizen, on the fact that things would fi-

nally be paid for not with double-digit inflation or public debt. This approach was basically procrastination, putting off payment for what was being purchased at lower values to future generations. For many years we indulged in a quality of life that was beyond our means. Those years of the 'Hot Autumn', the protests, the insidious historic compromise. It was the 1970s and 1980s, the halcyon years of *"Milano da bere"*[7] which eventually extended to Italy as a whole. By accruing debts that would be handed down to our grandchildren and great-grandchildren, our generation essentially squandered its wealth. The euro forced us to come to terms with our debts and to actualise them. It was a logical consequence of past actions. We couldn't have thought or acted otherwise, for we had been following a path that had distanced Italy from the rest of Europe; objectively speaking, our political conditions had become uniquely our own. If I'm not mistaken, Léon Blum[8] defined the Italian Communist Party as «*un parti nationaliste étranger*»; the Catholic Church, with its eschatological view of things, has a conception of the economy and of wealth production that is not exactly contiguous with the Communists' but certainly overlapping in terms of values. The Sermon on the Mount reflects the Catholic conception of work, quite different from Shintoism, which considers work as God's will made manifest in humankind. For us it is a harsh sentence: «By the sweat of your brow, you will produce food to eat», the book of Genesis intones. We chose a path where, in order to toe the line and adhere to the division of Yalta, we had to satisfy the demand for greater economic prosperity than we were realistically capable of producing. For better or for worse, it was our choice. Had someone proposed a more Thatcherite path, they would have had to face a violent conflict with Italian society. Perhaps our past

choices penalised us, but we could not remain outside Europe. We had debts, and we had to pay them back, simple as that.

Going back to the two cheerleaders for Milan and its economy, Clinton and Kohl, what were your impressions from the 'human' point of view?

What struck me about Clinton was his extraordinary ability to make an immediate impact. He is a man who interacts as if he's known you for years; he gives you the feeling that he's devoting his full attention to you. It's a rare capacity for spontaneous recitation, a subliminal talent of the political animal, and I was not immune to his charm: «*I love Milan*», his position, his smile, his gaze that conveys an exclusive interest in the person standing before him at that moment. Kohl, on the other hand, is a man of great 'weight': contemplative, rational, Cartesian, full of energy and strong of will. Perhaps he is less friendly than Clinton, at least on first impression, but he is solid. He's someone from whom you'd buy a used car, or to whom you'd lend your own. This is not to say that he is a shrinking violet by any means, or dominated by moral scruples. And as for Clinton, while fascinating, he also gave the impression of being a charmer, someone capable of bewildering you with his innate charisma.

We'll talk more about Bill Clinton later – and perhaps about the chair you were obliged to sit in by Congressman Henry Hyde – when we get to your visit to the White House. But to follow up on the G8 episode, while the two giants were celebrating the virtues of Milan and its competitiveness, where was the Italian prime minister, Romano Prodi?

He was there in the room, but he didn't witness the scene. I recounted it to him a few moments later when introducing some fellow mayors. The matchmaker was Stefano Parisi, then general director of the municipality of Milan who, several months previously, had left the economics department of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers and had therefore worked with Prodi. I told the Prime Minister about the exchange with Clinton and Kohl, and while he was pleased, he also made it clear that he would have preferred that the districts of Milan and Lombardy hadn't received all the credit. In fact Emilia-Romagna has important districts as well, though with slightly different features.

A comparison between the generous Kohl and his successor, Gerhard Schröder, who you met in 1998 at the Corriere della Sera building just before he became chancellor?

The first thing that comes to mind is an unkept promise – Schröder did not prove himself a very good boy scout. At that meeting, during the final toast, I secured his commitment, should he become chancellor, to reiterate what Helmut Kohl had said about the districts of Milan, his admiration of the industriousness and capacity for innovation of our region and its people. Schröder told me, «If I become chancellor, I will say the same». Several qualified exponents of our economy were there to witness this. Indeed, the big guns of the Rizzoli Group were present, including Cesare Romiti[9]. As in other cases where my prophecies have come true, such as that of the not-yet President of the Republic Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, I replied that the next time he came to Milan, I would be greeting him as Mr. Chancellor. And that I would hold him to his promise. He was,

of course, elected, and if I remember correctly he did visit Milan for a meeting of the European socialist parties. But his stay was brief, from the airport to the conference and back, so I had no opportunity to 'cash in' my credit. I tell this story, somewhat jokingly, to provide some insight into Schröder the man: during the course of that first meeting, which was a two-hour luncheon, I got the impression of a wise and very clever man, plus a touch of opportunism. Capable, more than ethical. Which is not to say that he was excessively loose, absolutely not. But there was something about him… One thing that struck me was the way he and his entourage of collaborators seemed to be on the same wavelength. I didn't know who they were, but even without understanding German I could sense the sharp, efficient professionalism of their dialogue. Reading his résumé, I saw that he was a professional politician, born to modest means, that he worked his way through university and had risen in the political ranks through dedication and determination. Very impressive and praiseworthy. If one is born a prince, that's one thing; if he instead becomes one, then appreciation of his hard work and abilities must be all the greater. Anyone who manages to achieve so much starting with so little deserves a lot of credit. I also recognised in him a remarkable ability for negotiation, someone who knew how to use all the tools of politics, including the ability to convince people of one thing and then do another, to move shrewdly through the political landscape and to play his role with a certain degree of unscrupulousness. These were merely my first impressions, and I don't know if they can be confirmed beyond the almost insignificant episode of his unkept promise to me. In any event, destiny has since taken its course, and now it is Angela Merkel's opinion of Milan that matters.

So Schröder was more like Clinton than Kohl.

One could say that, yes. Although he didn't have the charisma of Bill Clinton, whose ability to put people under his spell was unique. His hand on your shoulder, his eyes telling you that he really, truly does adore Milan, that there's no place he loves better.

A snake charmer?

It's more than just that. There is, I think, a degree to which these men convince themselves of their sincerity, and it is communicated as such. Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi does this when he appears to believe his "white lies" with such conviction. The word belongs in quotation marks, however, because he doesn't tell lies. What he does is identify himself so intensely with the role he's playing as to become sincere, even if he himself might have reservations about what he's saying. Not everyone knows how to do this.

Let's talk about the main points of your programme during both your first and second terms as mayor. It appeared that the mission to England in May of 1998 enabled you to launch two of your most important themes: benchmarking – specifically, a focus on the 'virtuous conduct' of local administrations rather than of governments, as in the case of the entry into the euro – and privatisation. It was during those months that the process of selling shares of the Milanese energy company AEM got underway, and it was during that visit to London that you met with the most important figures in the world of finance.

This is a juxtaposition of two apparently unrelated scenarios, but yes, in reality they are quite contiguous. City administrations can be measured against one another, even if their political, normative and/or legislative situations are different. But now, participating in a united Europe, the competition between territories are emerging, interacting in a way that has been called 'coopetition', a principle I borrowed and brought to the collaboration between Rome and Milan, where city administrations compare notes on problems that often overlap: pollution, urban sprawl, the new phenomenon of the 'metapolis', a recently coined term for urban areas that no longer have any boundaries, at least according to traditional definition of circumscribed urban space and surrounding agricultural territory. Now we have networks that swell and spread. Traffic and parking, social problems, disused areas that need redeveloping, energy production, the drawing power of universities, finance, industry and the service sector – all of wich contribute to the undesired effects of concentration, which lower the quality of life despite generating wealth. As such, these European cities, which share similar structural situations, got together to identify the issues and sectors where they could compare experiences on the basis of shared problems and devise a set of best practices – that is, the organisational, legal and economic solutions that seemed most appropriate. Basically, we were working to identify a shared paradigm and compare our experiences in a framework that nevertheless remained competitive. So Frankfurt, Birmingham, Milan or Barcelona would continued to compete with one another to host the Olympics, or to achieve the fastest growth in their stock exchanges, with French and Spanish investors trying to attract capital in Milan and Italians doing the same in Lyon. This went without saying, and

was in fact seen positively. It wasn't antagonism, but healthy competition, even emulation, with each competitor faithfully sharing their experiences with the others. The subject of privatisation is apparently extraneous, since the municipalities are also corporations that provide services, giant holding companies with resources, capital, property. All elements that must be optimised in the intense global competition between territories, and no longer between nations or individual companies. In short, cities must efficiently squeeze the greatest value possible from what they have, perhaps changing and rearranging their holdings, for example selling an energy company and investing the proceeds in infrastructure. Those were the days when we were promoting the sale of AEM stock in view of its privatisation. We were already in the phase of looking for individual investors, as well as for the 400 institutional investors who would benefit by buying well and selling better. Sure, we were giving up stock in a company that was founded 100 years ago to protect the territory, its businesses and its citizens at a time when industrialisation was spreading rapidly. Milan was the city with the highest energy consumption, but was also paying the highest rates. The constitution of AEM thus served a social purpose for the citizens and business community. Over the years, this system levelled out. The question arose: why should we maintain ownership of high-value stocks instead of ceding them and using the funds to build subway lines, public housing and other services to both attract and provide 'quality of life' for everyone? I still remember those photographs of Margaret Thatcher with the scions of finance: the Iron Lady was at the centre of this palingenesis of public function and private management. The utility was public, while the method of running it was no longer bureaucratic but entrepreneurial.

That's what I tried to accomplish during my 'guard duty', and I think I can say that there were brilliant successes, a few difficulties and many clashes, but in the end the results were undeniably positive. It was in this context that the competitive collaboration between the other cities present at the Birmingham G8 and the English experience of the Thatcher government's privatisations were brought together. This reminds me of a connection between a passage in Thatcher's *The Downing Street Years* and something that happened at the end of my term with regard to privatisation, among other things. Thatcher was losing her hold on the majority, because her policies, not populist but popular, had provoked dissent. When she announced the closing of several mines and a reduction of benefits, the Welsh miners went on strike for nearly two years, generating social division and conflict. Later, the benefits of Thatcher's actions became clear. But there is always a phase where the price of coherency is a loss of consensus. Doubts arise, and some political leaders experience what is known in psychological terms as regression. They take refuge in their roots, distancing themselves by seeking refuge in the safety of their electoral base, their own little consensus group. And that's how they lose sight of the big picture. This happens every day – investments in public works are stalled because they might generate dissent; a parking lot isn't built because it entails cutting down trees; privatisation doesn't move ahead because there's a risk of being criticised by the press. There is always a bit of that when it comes to privatisation. The system of publically-owned companies and political parties make it unlikely that those involved will not expect positions of power – it is the nature of those who govern to want that. However, in order to do something good for society and for future generations rather than merely

for the next election, one must work in an entirely different direction, thinking of the future rather than protecting one's own career.

In the course of your visit to London among the 'gnomes of finance', what impression did you get of their views on privatisation?

We did a tour of the big investment banks – Warburg, JP Morgan, Schroeder's. During a dinner in the cosy guest quarters of Fleming bank, furnished with magnificent paintings and precious antiques, including a perfectly polished dining table typical of the English aristocracy, the man who would become the general director of the Milan municipal government, Giorgio Porta, then commissioner for privatisations, put on an unforgettable performance to illustrate how he would privatise AEM and other companies. He proposed a balanced combination of a retail offering to incentivise the individual shareholder and the sale of capital assets to institutional investors to 'starve' demand and therefore raise the value. And then there was the question of maintaining the governance of the company. To explain how these three profiles would be harmonised and balanced, he did a demonstration that recalled the game of 'three-card monte', gesticulating all the while.

The contrast between my exuberant Italian colleague and the austere English bankers was quite amusing. My only regret is that not long after that occasion, the director of Fleming organised a dinner with Mrs. Thatcher, but unfortunately I had to decline the invitation due to previous commitments in Milan. It was a difficult sacrifice, given the stature of the former prime minister and the inspiration I drew from her in my work as mayor.

The London financiers approved our privatisation strategy

in part because they, as institutional investors, had a vested interest in buying and reselling. So they looked very favourably on the possibility, since it would create a market in which they could play a role. Everyone offered to act as placement agents. This tension of entwined interests, while legitimate, made me think of an analogy that illustrates the concept well: the relationship between interior decorator and furniture manufacturer. So they spoke with the seller. Some were already consultants – Goldman Sachs for AEM, JP Morgan for the Centrale del Latte –, while others proposed themselves as investors and buyers, but in reality these roles often change. It was here that I saw, particularly in determining the prices, the same relationship that exists between the interior decorator on the one hand and the furniture, kitchen and bath suppliers on the other, given the frequency of contact between them. I had the feeling that in all the various forms of the placement of public assets, the priority of the advisors was to favour the market, both retail and institutional, rather than helping the seller get the maximum price. Apart from this ethical consideration, for a public institution, there is nothing negative about a balance between the maximisation of income for allocation to public works and the political will to realise a large-scale privatisation. In Milan, the first Italian city to venture into privatisation, we found the political will to design an offering that was remunerative for 400,000 individual investors without being speculative for the seller. If I had to do it again, perhaps I would be more determined to keep the 'interior decorators' on a leash and to insist on a higher share price: I would have received more money for public works, without upsetting the institutional investors and individual shareholders – at least not too much.

These bankers also proposed other instruments in addition to privatisation to generate resources, which were either not used at all or, if so, only towards the end of your term. They insisted particularly on project financing and the Private Finance Initiative, or on stock issues already valued in euros. Why were you skeptical about using a more ample 'menu' for the city's finances?

We only considered that road because it was our first experience with operations of this sort. We felt it was a miracle to succeed in a real privatisation after years of immobility. The Lega presented 5,000 amendments, and the city council promoted a referendum on the privatisation of AEM. We felt that a clear-cut, understandable, not overly complex process would be the most productive. I should add that the other instruments were forms of joint investment with private interests or debt financing. In recent years, project financing has been used to build lines four and five of the metro and will perhaps be used for the tunnel under the Bastioni[10]. We did not issue municipal bonds, as it is a form of debt that in some cases proves more costly than ordinary borrowing. Sometimes other local administrations use it for political reasons, especially if they have citizen-investors participating in the construction of the public works that they themselves will use: the citizens at large benefit, even though it is not strictly logical in the economic sense. Debt in its various forms is one thing; reinvestment is another, i.e. changing the nature of an asset: selling shares and building metros, selling business units that no longer have a political function and reinvesting the resulting resources in services necessary for the city. Why was the Centrale del Latte[11] created? Because a 100 years ago, milk was a way of life, but also a way to die from bovine tuberculosis. Winston Churchill said

that no investment was ever more productive that putting milk into children. The same applied to the municipal pharmacies, responsible for the distribution of quinine to combat malaria. With the passage of time, these social functions and these illnesses disappeared, and the existence of the firms was only justified by the fact that they provided jobs, consulting and contracts to the political system. We transformed them into companies: some we sold, others we left operating at a profit.

One of your many inspirations over the course of your two terms was the English model of public administration. Now, more than 10 years later, do you think that it would be possible to apply this model to Italy as a whole, or is that a labor of Sisyphus?

The English language also provides inspiration – 'reinventing government', in the present tense, suggesting an ongoing process. In 1997-98, we examined the programme of public administration reform in the US called just that, 'Reinventing Government'. The head of the programme, Robert Stone, gave me a lapel pin as a gift – a little silver hammer – at the Assolombarda conference that year, during which we discussed the issue, as well as our desire to borrow the American experience for the reform of the 'municipal machine'. When Vice President Al Gore came to lunch at Palazzo Marino for the 125th anniversary of *Corriere della Sera*, I naturally showed up with the little hammer in clear view on my lapel. Mr. Gore adjusted it for me to the proper position, since he had been delegated by Clinton to oversee the public administration reform. In our territorial government, we expressed a determination and coherency of principles and programmes that no other administration, local or national, has been able to reproduce. And

we were able to do so for two reasons: one, because the society of which we are the expression is objectively more modern and advanced, more Anglo-American, if you will, yet without that consumeristic, frivolous component that derives from a superficial fixation with trends and fashion. Today, the world speaks English, just as 2,000 years ago it spoke Latin – it's a question of dominant culture, of a modern hegemony. The soul of the world, Hegel would say, at the present time is American. Scientific research is published in English. So it is only right to take inspiration and ideas from the Anglophone countries, particularly the United States, because they have paved a path towards de-bureaucratisation, towards the liberation of economy and society from excessive government intervention. Prior to reform, an American public administrator had to fill out a mountain of forms just to requisition an ashtray. When Al Gore smashed an ashtray on live television with a hammer, he was symbolically underscoring his government's determination to implement radical change, to transform bureaucratic obstacles into concrete action – thus the motto of the reform programme, "From red tape to results", from which my administration drew inspiration. These ideas are consistent with the principles of economic freedom, private as opposed to public property, the dynamism of the individual rather than the lethargy of bureaucracy. We can and must move towards these principles, inevitably. However, Italy is long and narrow – the north, with its constant ferment, is the most economically fertile area, whereas it would be extremely difficult to develop this tradition in places with less individual autonomy, fewer resources and a different mentality. One need only think of the differences between the Lombardo-Veneto cultural heritage and that of the kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

Another G8 leader you met in Birmingham was Jean Chrétien, then prime minister of Canada, who came to Milan and was hosted by you at Palazzo Marino just a few days later, in June 1998. What was your impression of Chrétien? Did you ever have the opportunity to meet with him after that?

Our conversation in Birmingham was more of a passing chat. We exchanged only a few words, commenting on Milan's sistership with Toronto. Our encounter at Palazzo Marino on the other hand was more extensive, and significant for me because he was the first head of state I received as mayor. We spoke in French, which I know a bit better than English. I was struck by his lucidity and immediacy. If I had to identify a single trait shared by all the heads of state I've known, it is surely the ability to get straight to the point, to simplify what is complicated, to instantly synthesise an argument that would, in less expert hands, tend to wander. Chrétien has this ability to drive a sword to the heart of the matter, like Alexander with the Gordian knot. He knew our city and its problems, and we spoke of the prospects and perils of globalisation. The Twin Towers disaster was still three years off, but I remember sensing that he had a clear vision of a sequence of events that might lead to such an event, as if foreseeing it.

Canada is a country of vast spaces and resources, yet its population is comparatively small. Chrétien therefore faced the problem of developing a huge area, wealthy yes, but with a disproportionate social structure – immigration, for example, is heavy, and Canada needs to be able to metabolise these external influences and make them Canadian. We talked about relatives of mine who had sold all their property and emigrated to Canada, and whom I'd visited on my travels. He gave the im-

pression of a clear-headed, agreeable and direct man, with little regard for protocol. *In nomen omen*: a good Christian, and certainly a man who bore his enormous responsibilities with vitality and serenity.

Some time later, I had the pleasure of being received in his official residence in Ottawa, which was as dignified as it was modest. The difference between the Anglophone democracies and countries like France and Italy, which have experienced periods of absolutism and, later, dictatorship, can be seen in these symbols of power. Once when I was in London, for example, Nick Raynsford, then minister for London, called me a taxi at the House of Commons and personally carried my bag to the coat room. While we made our way through courtyards and corridors, he was greeted by the ushers without any particular deference, like a normal citizen who just happened to have important responsibilities at that moment. And this man was at the level of cabinet minister of the Blair administration, a man responsible for a city of nine million inhabitants. Another example: the office of New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani, a man of immense power, was the humblest of spaces, the only indulgences being the desk used by Fiorello LaGuardia and a bow window. Conversely, the office of Jean Tiberi, mayor of Paris, was striking for its ample dimensions, its imperial grandeur, the precious tapestries on the walls. The mayor of Buenos Aires even had *cuirassiers* in high uniform in his office. These conspicuous, tangible displays of power seem to want to compensate for a lack of real power, whereas I saw that in New York and London, real power is signaled through understatement. Getting back to my last meeting with Chrétien, it was 18 April 2002, and once again we enjoyed a most cordial conversation, during which I offered my condolences for the

four Canadians who had died in Afghanistan and discussed the joint projects for the sister cities of Milan and Toronto, particularly in the areas of contemporary art, design and fashion. Our encounter coincided with the airplane accident at the Pirelli tower, so I had to hurry back to Milan that afternoon.

June 1998 was also the first edition of the States-General, and there was a session with foreign mayors, including Eberhard Diepgen of Berlin and José María Alvarez del Manzano of Madrid. Back then, Milan was extremely far behind, like an open construction site compared with the other major european cities. On 17 July of that year you went to Berlin and did a reconnaissance of the buildings being erected by the world's greatest architects in preparation for the transfer of the capital. Since then Milan has made a lot of progress in terms of urban development.

From this point of view, yes, our city was behind, but now 10.5 million square meters of disused industrial areas have been reclaimed. Other European cities seem to have made an earlier start on the transition from post-industrial to neo-urban. My visit to the urban centre in Potsdammer Platz gave me an idea which I then conveyed to the president of Fiera Milano, Luigi Roth, which he implemented: a time-lapse video camera that would tell the story of the city's transformation, from the demolition of the crumbling ruins of East Berlin to the relocation of the cranes to the rise of the futuristic new structures. Looking back, I can say with justifiable pride that, since that round table with my fellow mayors where we discussed these issues, Milan has closed the gap.

During the course of a meeting with Mayor Diepgen, an interesting episode with regard to the Teatro degli Arcimboldi

and urban development funding. The European Community obliged us to tender the restoration of the theatre through a complex procedure, thus withholding the funds for many years as we waited to find out who would do the work, rather than enabling us to utilise modern financial bartering for a project donated to the city. Fortunately, thanks to the lobby of European mayors, the European Commission granted us a more accelerated and pragmatic transformation of the funds. In this way we were able to rebuild the Teatro degli Arcimboldi, just as other European cities were able to implement similarly important public projects. If this hadn't happened, it would not have been possible to make such a rapid transition from the post-industrial to the neo-urban model. At the time of the mayoral round table, we were behind. Our developable spaces were bare, with little construction going on, and no specific political decisions had been taken. Now, eight years later, all of these areas are occupied by either completed projects, like the Fiera, or by works in progress designed by the same great architects who have been working in other European metropolis. I should add that there will be an actuation phase that will follow our decision, since in Italy it can take longer to arrive at a decision to build something than to actually construct it. How do you think we were able to negotiate an agreement among the 42 property owners of what will be Milan's counterpart to the Défense, the Garibaldi-Repubblica area, among whom was a particularly stubborn and polemical man who had filed a lawsuit regarding the constructability of his land, not to mention the Region, which eventually bought his building from us? We did it with the simple logic of the condominium: everyone was assigned the same index of constructability, in proportion to the square meterage they owned. Otherwise we never would

have gotten all 42 landowners to agree, every one of whom wanted the skyscraper on his property and a lawn on that of his neighbour.

[6] Confindustria is the Italian employers' union, founded in 1910. Gabriele Albertini was chairman of Federmeccanica, the federation of mechanical employers, belonging to Confindustria.

[7] "Milano da bere", roughly translated as "Drink up Milan!", was the famous slogan of a 1980s advertising campaign for an alcoholic drink called Amaro Ramazzotti. It was then adopted by journalists and used to deride the emerging social classes, particularly those linked with fashion and design.

[8] André Léon Blum (9 April 1872 – 30 March 1950) was a French politician, usually identified with the moderate left, and three times the prime minister of France.

[9] Cesare Romiti (born 24 June 1923) is an important Italian manager and entrepreneur. Former CEO of Fiat, he was also chairman of the publishing group Rizzoli Corriere della Sera (RCS).

[10] The ring road around the centre of Milan.

[11] The milk factory of Milan.

Chapter 2

Wherein are recounted the exploits of the American master, his broken window, European friendships and the *grandeur* of our French cousins

In early 1999, the middle of February to be exact, a series of newspaper stories appeared with harsh titles like "Albertini appoints himself sheriff", "Lessons from America for Albertini", "Albertini plays the tough American", "Trigger-happy mayor" and so forth, all in response to your meeting with a man despised by Italian politicians and the general public alike. In reality there was an almost total split between what the journalists and politicians thought and the real needs of the citizens of Milan and elsewhere. Who was this 'terrible monster' that you met in New York?

That's a good way to frame the image of Rudolph Giuliani, for it allows us to rediscover the man himself by looking at his values and the practical choices he made in terms of security. Examining his work as mayor of New York, which he still was at the time, one sees a concrete choice of authority, not authoritarianism as the pundits would have it, and of firm government, not the militarisation of the police. The Italian press practiced instead what Lenin or Gramsci[12] would have called the "identification of the target", a *de facto* invention aimed exclusively at denigrating the subject. During our meeting, he clarified for me in an almost lexical way the

meaning of 'zero tolerance', which we usually translate literally and inappropriately as *tolleranza zero*. But by tolerance, Giuliani intended administrative slovenliness, a lack of conscientiousness on the part of institutions which then reverberates in the community. This is a big mistake, because citizens need to feel that these institutions are paying attention to their problems and working to resolve them; that they are attentive to the public's desire for safety and civility. Government institutions have to set an example in this regard, so that citizens can follow it. So Giuliani implemented a set of interventions that achieved truly brilliant results in New York, which we reproduced in Milan during my two terms on the same proportional scale. The numbers tell the story – crime decreased by 30 per cent after my arrival in 1997, while security fell from number one on the list of citizens' greatest concerns to number two, replaced by traffic and pollution. Giuliani's programme was utterly lost in translation, as it were. Whether it was mystification or simplification, he was portrayed as 'the sheriff', 'the vigilante', the 'hard-liner' who rounded up and arrested anyone and everyone. No one wrote anything, on the other hand, about his vision of urban security, which I borrowed and implemented in our city.

So who was Giuliani from the personal, rather than mediatic point of view?

He has a certain inflexibility about him, but he isn't the man we read about – he's not intransigent due to some lack of ability to get along with others, or aggressive or polemical. He is simply a man of great moral rectitude. What impressed me most was his sense of the moral responsibilities of his job.

Let's not forget that before becoming mayor he was the district attorney who had crippled the New York mafia. A sort of American Giovanni Falcone[13], with the same heroism but, fortunately, without the martyrdom. Giuliani is in this sense a 'man of the law', insofar as he sees the law as indispensable. An inscription from Roman law that one often sees on the friezes of European courthouses comes to mind: *legibus oboedire debemus si liberi esse volumus.* While Giuliani appears to be a relentless man, he is simply upholding the strong moral convictions he learned from his family, his school, the value system into which he was born and raised. I must say that I immediately felt great personal sympathy, though I don't presume to compare myself or my job to him or to his. Which brings me to the Jesuits. As some readers may know, I spent 12 years of my life with them, and I came to know a number of major figures in the Jesuit hierarchy, such as Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini. Blaise Pascal, in his *Provincial Letters*, uses the term 'Jesuit' as a synonym for hypocrite, and speaks of them as mystifiers and confounders of reality, as opportunists whose educational and behavioral principles are founded on duplicity, falsehoods and doubt. Perhaps a Jesuit or two has deviated, but the founder, St. Ignatius of Loyola, articulates quite clearly the cardinal rule of ethics, in his case religious, but one which is also applicable to the lay values of Giuliani or those of a man in search of his faith such as myself: *todo modo para buscar la voluntad divina*, or 'use all means in search of the divine will'. 'Use all means' does not mean being so stupid as to bang one's head against a wall, but to have the intelligence to manoeuvre through the labyrinth of reality, sometimes going backwards, other times laterally. Lenin's zig-zag path is not unrelated to this concept.

Once one's values and principles are sound and thus become a categorical imperative of one's conscience, any means are valid. Other philosophers have theorised the premise differently, and many people have applied it without any moral structure to back it up. Obviously, with the ethical principle in place, one must maintain a balance between the end and the means. So, in light of this little excursus, what I saw in Giuliani were two fundamental elements, foremost of which was a strong morality – and by this I mean the morality of institutions, not of the individual, for I detected in him neither sanctimoniousness nor hypocrisy, but rather a rigorous determination to pursue the cause in which he believed: defeating evil. Secondly, a sharp intelligence, in the etymological sense of *intra or intus legere*, the ability to understand the complexity of a society or a community in all its parts, even its deepest and most intimate ones. He was smart enough to understand that the military strength of a reorganised and expanded police force was not enough, that the spark had to come through understanding. The community first had to realise the state of decay in which the city found itself, the concept of the 'broken window'.

With 'broken window' you are referring to a controversial article by James Wilson and George Kelling from 1982 that inspired Giuliani and constituted both the premise and the corollary of 'zero tolerance'. Is this a concept you shared in your vision of civic administration?

According to the 'broken window' approach, urban decay and neglect – that is, the window that doesn't get fixed, the pothole that doesn't get filled, the crumbling cornice of a

building induce a state of slovenliness in the minds of the individual citizens. In other words, there is a direct correlation between the state of the territory in which people live and the behavior of the people living there. Administrative neglect generates a sense of detachment from one's community and leads to illicit, even criminal conduct. So, the parallel between the fight against graffiti writers and other crackdowns is exactly the same: government needs to take care of the visible aspects of its territory, even if they seem marginal. A pertinent analogy comes to mind – in all the drug rehabilitation centres I've ever visited, from Padre Eligio to Don Mazzi and San Patrignano, regardless of the finances available or the approach to rehabilitation, they are all very attentive to the aesthetic aspect – well-tended gardens, modern furnishings, clean and dignified spaces. Because mental and moral order derive at least in part from external order. Those who need to put their lives and consciences back together need to live in a nice, orderly environment. We have all experienced certain moments in our lives when things haven't gone as well as we had expected, and this can challenge our moral solidity, be it an illness, economic misfortune or problems in love. To get back on our feet we need, among other things, liveable and dignified surroundings. Giuliani was in this sense a man of balance: on the one hand, there was the toughness of his crackdowns; on the other, his sensitivity towards the weak and the discouraged. What's more, his approach transgressed the traditional political definitions of 'left' and 'right'.

Some time ago in Trieste, back when I was coordinator of the metropolitan mayors, I had a debate with my friend Walter Veltroni, mayor of Rome, on the subject of the municipal police. I had proposed that the laws governing local law en-

forcement take into consideration the possibility of transforming the *vigili urbani*, or traffic cops, into armed police officers with the ability to defend themselves. People began talking of truncheons and militarisation, confusing the issue. Veltroni and others contested my position, stating that the *vigile urbano* had to be a sort of social worker in uniform, without any military role whatsoever. The argument was heated but respectful, and we eventually decided that those who shared my view were "for the father", while the others were "for the mother", taking the issue in a psychoanalytical direction. Be that as it may, there is a related issue of responsibility: one must always distinguish the victim from the criminal, otherwise the line between them is blurred. I don't agree with those who believe that the criminal is fundamentally a victim of society, and that the responsibility belongs to a social context. People are responsible for their own actions, and that includes administrators. That said, in New York and Milan, the results of the application of the 'broken window' approach are there for all to see.

I'm not sure I've answered the question, so I'll go back and say that Giuliani's personality corresponds with his politics, and I felt a great affinity for him from the start, when we met in the office that was once occupied by Fiorello LaGuardia at the New York City Council. I was struck by the minimalism of the space. Here was the mayor of the most important city in the world, running a metropolis of nine million, and his office was a cubbyhole. Dignified, of course, but very modest. Quite a contrast, as I mentioned, to the office of the mayor of Paris at the Hôtel de Ville, which is instead a scene of *grandeur*, sumptuous, almost vain, with attendants in full formal dress and sofas so enormous, in necessary proportion

with the vast imperial spaces, as to prohibit a man of normal stature like myself from leaning against the backrest if he also wishes to keep his feet on the floor and avoid looking like a small child. There was a flower pot the size of a Fiat 500, which in that enormous space didn't seem all that big. Anyway, it's clear that the Anglophone and Latin cultures have two different concepts of democracy and position.

A couple of thoughts on Giuliani: you mentioned that debate about the 'mommy' traffic cop versus the 'daddy' armed officer. But in the course of your visit to New York there were other issues that were misreported, like the 'dum-dum bullet' – the Italian press maintained that Giuliani had armed his police force with hollow-point bullets when in fact they were rubber bullets.

That's right. It was the same thing that happened with 'zero tolerance', also misunderstood through ignorance. The terms of the debate were truly 'anti-pathetic', in the sense that they went against feeling.

Giuliani was also capable of great generosity. After 11 September, with just a few months of his term left, he got down on the street and worked alongside the emergency crews. What do remember of your last meeting, when the City of Milan made him an honorary citizen in 2004? Giuliani himself was impressed by the visit. In fact, after the ceremony he was taken over to La Scala to see the recently completed restoration.

Yes, our last meeting was especially gratifying, both for the dedication he wrote in a book I'd been given and for the warmth of our conversation. He was almost affectionate, and

for a man with his character, that means a lot. He had very kind things to say about Milan, which went unreported by the media, who preferred to give more space to the rather impolite behaviour of another famous Italo-American, Robert De Niro, who that same week had ostentatiously refused our city's 'Ambrogino d'Oro' award. Giuliani was not offering facile compliments for the imitation of his model; he understood that we had been the most authentic and consequential interpreters of his own values, and he noticed the positive results. This brought me a legitimate, I think, sense of pride.

He appreciated the work at La Scala, which had been completely restored in just two years, despite constant aggression from politicians and the media. The opposition wanted the last word to be the 'destruction' of Piermarini's building[14]. They would have liked to portray us as Herostratus, who set fire to the Temple of Artemis in Ephesus so he would be remembered for posterity. Instead, we succeeded in bringing La Scala back to life. Obviously it was necessary to 'destroy' before modernising and then restoring the theatre to its original state. That was the reason we removed all of the architectural superfluities of the past 50 years, which in truth were just layers of ugliness. In fact, the work done at La Scala was not unlike our security programme – it was essentially the application of the 'broken window' model. This is why my colleague and teacher Giuliani understood and appreciated it. It wasn't an accident that he became an honorary citizen of Milan that day. Nor was it insignificant that the criticisms we received over the restoration of La Scala were similar to those received by Giuliani for his clean-up of New York.

Your work on the security issue continued through 1999 with-

out paying much heed to the opinion of the press. In fact it was that autumn you met the mayor of Neuilly, a small city outside of Paris. His name, certainly less familiar then than now, was Nicolas Sarkozy, who later became France's minister of the interior and is today, of course, its president. He seemed to you a fellow admirer of Giuliani's methods with regard to urban security.

I met Sarkozy at the headquarters of Eridania Béghin-Say, in the presence of Antoine Bernheim, president of Generali, and the Italian Ambassador Sergio Vento. Sarkozy struck me as different from the other French politicians I'd met around that time, namely my counterparts in Lyon and Paris, Raymond Barre and Jean Tiberi. The young mayor of Neuilly seemed to me somewhat consumed by ambition. I didn't have much to go on, obviously, given the brevity of the meeting. But there were gestures and looks, almost imperceptible. He also conveyed the impression of a capable and intelligent man, but one who was driven by an ambition that I won't call ruthless, but it was certainly intense. One saw clearly, even then, his desire and above all his conscious intention to come across as the future leader of France – a role that had perhaps been suggested to him by others.

You mean hoped for, or foretold?

Foretold, absolutely. And he knew it already. We found a strong common ground that evening on one issue, insofar as both of us had to lead our cities under centre-left, and therefore theoretically hostile, national governments. From what I was able to gather, Sarkozy governed his city well. So I'm not surprised that his paradigm for success at the municipal level

led him to a position in the national government in 2002. At the time we were both facing imminent change in the political situation of our respective countries, and Sarkozy was very astute in foreseeing this change. Moreover, like many of the successful politicians of his generation that I've met, he has the intuition, the acuity and the spontaneity to face problems without becoming mired in peripheral details and redundant analysis. In short, Sarkozy has a talent for getting to the root of the problem. Compared with Barre's equilibrium or Tiberi's ability to metabolise adversity, Sarkozy seemed to me tough and determined. But precisely because he's a sharp, dynamic and intensely committed man, rather highly strung, he also seemed fragile, less able to take a punch. One senses in him a man who can make bold, even aggressive leaps forward, but who also knows moments of depression and personal defeat. To sum up, I'm not sure if I saw in him then the future leader of France, but I certainly knew that he was destined for the highest levels of government. I should mention that we touched briefly on the subject of security, and I found him open-minded and at the same time tough on crime, seeking integration for immigrants on the one hand and greater rigor in dealing with widespread predatory crime, misleadingly known as microcriminality, on the other. I also recall congratulating him on the regeneration of the area of Neuilly where we were, just across from La Défense.

Before going into more detail about other important figures in French politics and the economy, I'd like to continue our discussion about politicians who have addressed the issue of urban security in recent years. You talked about upholding the law with Giuliani, Barre (who we'll get to know) and Sarkozy. But there's

another individual you met in 1999 in Bonn – Otto Schily, then Germany's minister of the interior. A rather curious pairing, if I may say so – a man like you, with your background in business and industry, exchanging views with a man rooted in political and ideological extremism, who had also served as lead attorney for the notorious RAF, the Rote Armeé Fraktion. Yet a delightful man who loves Italy, knows our language and culture and is one of the main exponents of the German social democratic current known as Toskana Fraktion. Could you give us a little sketch of his personality?

I can give you more than a sketch, for we had a lengthy meeting in the federal ministry, and we saw each other again for a season premiere at La Scala here in Milan. More recently, we met by chance in November 2004 at Norman Foster's new Bundestag. Schily seemed a very likeable and precise man. In his work, he appeared highly sensitive to the problems of humanity. So, while he may have sympathised in his youth with the 'revolution', he did so from a position of solid human values – ethical, social and professional – also evident in his work at the ministry. In our reflections on the problems of big cities at the turn of the millennium and the challenges of globalisation, there was greater focus on the social dimension, on redemption rather than repression. But we were in perfect agreement on several issues, such as the need for a modern and more technological approach to security. Clearly he wasn't a fellow student of Giuliani, but we shared the view that the problem of upholding the law had to be addressed with the twin tools of redemption and repression, just as we use two hands to cut a steak, one holding the knife and the other, the fork.

Let's move on to another topic. Between 1998 and 1999, you visited Paris and Lyon. In the French capital you met with the mayor, Jean Tiberi, who was caught in the middle of a scandal over influence peddling and public housing. He was the successor of Jacques Chirac at the Hôtel de Ville, his loyal friend and associate.

That's right, we met at the height of the scandal. It seemed to me that the relationship between Tiberi and Chirac was similar to that of Evangelisti and Andreotti[15]. That evening he held a reception in honour of the mayors of the world's great cities, which he himself did not attend for health reasons, whether real or diplomatically invented. Our face-to-face meeting was cordial and formal, and he impressed me as an experienced professional. But what struck me most about the Paris city hall, as I said before, was the incongruity between the grandiose architecture and the relative modesty of a mayor's power. Tiberi had the air of a politician *d'antan*, of yesteryear, with a personality capable of absorbing any blow and taking any amount of heat. A man who, despite the political tensions and health problems (real or not) that he was battling at the time, maintained a remarkable serenity and lucidity. I've frequently notice this trait in men of power – some are good at their jobs, others less so, but none of them lose their head in moments of crisis. When faced with situations in which normal people would be agitated, even hysterical, these men probably experience the same emotions but they don't allow them to emerge; they metabolise them. They manage to skillfully separate the person from the job, from the institution, and to analise personal insults from a distance, then absorb them. Tiberi attended those meetings of

the world's mayors while newspaper headlines blasted out the scandal, yet he seemed untouched by it. This brings to mind Rudyard Kipling's *Letter to the Son*, where the great English writer enumerates a dozen rules for cultivating character, patience and the ability to control one's emotions in the face of adversity. I don't know if my Parisian colleague had read it, but he certainly understood its practical application. In some ways, Tiberi reminded me of a typical Italian politician, perhaps in part because of his surname, which I believe is Corsican.

Another prominent Frenchman you met at the time of your first encounter with Sarkozy was the financier Antoine Bernheim, who was very interested in what was going on in Italy. Can we talk a little about French finance and industry, which in recent years have been an important presence in Italy, and Milan in particular?

Bernheim had economic power sculpted into his very features. He wasn't sitting across from me, but slightly to the left. Even without listening to him, his physiognomy told you who he was. He conveyed the idea of a powerful man subjugated, however, to the aphrodisiacal scent of his own power. Speaking with him, this impression was confirmed. He explained his concept of corporate governance, whereby diffused ownership was a trifle, and expressed his conviction that privatisation must be accomplished with a strong, concentrated ownership structure. He could not conceive, not even remotely, that they could develop as public companies, because he felt this approach led to corporate non-governance and inefficiency of the entire system, and to domination by

management over the shareholders. This view is certainly entrepreneurial but also marked by a desire for power. Bernheim was much more shareholder than manager in all his activities, including those concerning his equity interest in Mediobanca[16]. I had spoken with Vincenzo Maranghi about Bernheim on the numerous occasions we'd met, with and then – after his death – without Enrico Cuccia. Maranghi described a vigorous and reliable partner, like all men of resolute character. A tough negotiator, an individualist, firm in his values and interests, who also knew how to manage his own pride. A man little inclined, therefore, to overcomplication. Shakespeare's Julius Caesar comes to mind, when he equates his own character with Polaris: «I am constant as the northern star / Of whose true-fix'd and resting quality / There is no fellow in the firmament». There is something of this in Bernheim's personality, which makes him hard and stubborn, but also extremely reliable and trustworthy. Very different from the other investors I've known, whose faces I recall better than their names. There is a sharp difference, but this is more a perception than a demonstrable claim. The investors we found in the UK were primarily interested in acquiring shares in AEM and thus making a financial, not industrial, investment, because our line in the first privatisation was market listing, split between an investment tailored to the movers and shakers of finance – i.e. an investment extended to the 400 financial institutions who subsequently bought in – and the offering to small investors within the public at large. These British contacts viewed the investment from a purely financial standpoint – they wanted to pay little for something that was worth a lot – a speculation in the strictly objective sense, not with the amoral connotations that often accom-

pany this word. They were looking to make a gain, considered the investment in AEM as productive and consequentially declared their interest. The offering price of AEM was prudential, however, and too low with respect to the strong demand that I sensed. They were not concerned with governing the company, it was not an industrial investment. That group – and particularly Bernheim, who was linked to Italian financial allies including, I think, Romiti, Maranghi and others – perceived the dimension of the investment as entrepreneurial, and thus governance of the capital for the industrial strategies of the company they were investing in. One much clearer factor was the aspect of diversity. It should also be said that the capital of global finance, the City, is in London not Paris.

What do you think of the claim that in the Anglo model, industry is at the service of finance, whereas in the French model it's the other way round? Is the latter approach a good strategy for the State?

This is the conceptual translation of what I was describing in experiential terms. The relationship between finance and industry is comparable to the debate between a Ptolemaic view and a Copernican one. In one model, it almost seems that the goals of industrial investment are financial in nature, and that these govern the system. In the other, financial investment is used to further industrial strategies. We basically have inverted situations here. The causes can be attributed to any number of things – the histories of two countries, the differences in the way their respective states were born, the policies instituted by Jean-Baptiste Colbert[17].

Let's talk about the role of France's big public utility industries and companies in helping the government during the nine years that you were mayor. Obviously we're not dealing with charity organisations, but can we say that the country benefitted from them?

In keeping with the model of finance at the service of industrial strategy and the decision-making power of the investor, there were several episodes involving Milan that resulted in a powerful influence of the French economy over our territory. It's true that, after a 30-year wait, a transitory contract was granted to the Spanish company Endesa, but it was a consortia in which the French multiutility Suez-Ondeo Degrémont figured prominently that built the water purification plants at Nosedo, San Rocco and Peschiera Borromeo[18]. The French won the contract because they offered the best quality, technology and price, and their construction and investment abilities turned out to be formidable. They won fair and square, not with the attitude of a Napoleonic *Grande Armée*. I should point out, however, that unlike our situation in Italy, French private industries that compete internationally are greatly assisted and supported by both the government and the nation as a whole. Another case worth mentioning is the Edison affair, perhaps more striking to someone like me, who comes from the world of small industry and is accustomed to viewing the interventionism of big industrial monopolies with a certain hostility. During my 'watch' as mayor, four fundamental events took place with regard to AEM: the public offering and the acquisition of three trillion lire; the acquisition of ENEL's power stations after difficult negotiations which eventually turned out well

for the system; entry into the telecommunications field through a brilliant city-wide cabling operation; and lastly, the agreement between EDF and AEM on Edison[19]. It was awkward to be sitting around a table with Pierre Gadonneix and other big-name French executives, whose cordial formality betrayed a certain sense of superiority on their part. You could see in their eyes that they were thinking, "*ah, les italiens...*". Nonetheless, for the first time, among all the potential partners out there, *les français* had chosen *les italiens*, specifically our privatised AEM, with the aim of acquiring Edison – a company which, although private, had recently been under inefficient semi-public management and no longer had the numbers to stay in the energy market without public subsidisation. This agreement brought me great satisfaction.

Here's a slightly provocative question, but one that can wrap up this whole discussion: you started out as a Confindustria man, then a union-breaking champion of Federmeccanica[20], always and absolutely a free-market advocate. After nine years at the helm of Italy's most important city from an economic standpoint, did you leave the job with a different philosophy on the issue of national and local government equity participation in strategic sectors? Like milk plants, pharmacies and everything that was to be privatised on a priority basis? Or did you develop an Einaudian synthesis that thus involves the state in various strategic sectors, especially in periods of economic crisis or reconstruction?

Based on the teachings of Adam Smith, the state must be involved in a few sectors in which private activity cannot be remunerated. And since the purpose of this is to perform

functions that encourage capitalisation and the distribution of the results of investment, the state cannot become involved without being deflected from the proper concept of economy. As the prophet of *laissez-faire* himself explains, some sectors essential for the activity of a nation must be managed by the state, because they lack market factors. This may evolve over time: things that lack market factors can acquire them, as in the cases of milk and quinine. My most recent experience as head of an institution and at the same time president of a holding company – i.e. the City of Milan – convinced me of two things: the first is the clear existence of the 'invisible hand', the second is that the competition that should ensure quality and quantity of service, compensation, and best performance in tendering is not always well practised. So I acknowledge that private is not always good, i.e. there are conditions in which inappropriate, anomalous management of a private activity is worse than the distributive management of the public system. In fact, I have seen many foul things: tenders that don't work, companies that cheat, conniving bureaucracies. I'm not speaking just about corruption but also inefficiency, slovenliness, excessive tolerance. As far as economic strategies are concerned, we demonstrated with our companies, both state-owned and private, that a service can be managed efficiently and productively in both cases for the owners we represented and the consumers as well. There can therefore be a concept of efficiency that is not speculative or capitalist in the strict sense – that of the accumulation of wealth and the sharing of profits. I leave this experience with the strengthened view that state ownership or public control is compatible with the efficient management of a service intended for the public at large. Furthermore, public control

ensures a balance between supply and demand that is not always present in the market. But, in the end, one finds both private companies in crisis, as in the case of Edison when we bought it, and inefficient political systems. In other words, I leave with a less Manichean view.

Let's conclude this chapter by talking about Raymond Barre, a friend of yours who recently passed away – a great technocrat who was the prime minister of France before becoming mayor of Lyon, Milan's sister city.

From the moment I met him, I was awed to be in the presence of one of the fathers of Europe – a feeling that was eventually tempered as I got to know him as a colleague and mayor of Milan's sister city. He was certainly one of the great figures in the political history of the last several decades, if not the last century. His great skill, his extraordinary courtesy and attentiveness, his *savoir faire* in identifying himself with his institutional role are unforgettable. He was a consummate gentleman: refined, polite and cultured. And a man of great judgment as well. It was he – and this is the first time I've ever confessed this – who suggested write that first letter to the citizens of Milan in 1998, which I then repeated in 2001 and 2005. Three times in nine years. Barre even gave me tips to ensure that this approach would be effective and appreciated. The relationship between citizen and mayor is unique, in part because mayors are elected directly, but that's not all. There's an anthropomorphisation of the institution, though not on a Napoleonic scale – a mayor is far too busy to have time to feel important. We had long conversations about the painful reality of there being too many needs for us to re-

spond to. We spoke of refusing to indulge in the seduction of prestige and power, about the disproportionate ratio between our responsibility and the real possibility of action. We exchanged stories about the odd things that can happen to you when you're a mayor, like being denounced in the same breath for not having completely eliminated the mosquitos as well as for the pollution from the pesticides you used to eliminate most of them. This job is a contradiction that leaves you so exposed as to make it impossible not to be seen in public, or to live by reflected image. So in order to overcome this conflict, the best approach is often communicating directly with the citizens, whether to ask an opinion or communicate how things are going, politically and administratively. Barre pointed this out to me, and I followed his advice. In fact it was very soon after my return from Lyon that I sent my first letter to the Milanese people. It was an excellent piece of advice.

Another aspect of Barre's personality that always impressed me was his Olympian calm. He was a man who had partecipated in many tumultuous historical conflicts and upheavals, but he never gave the impression of having known the slightest interior conflict. Certainly he had experienced both great satisfaction and defeat, but he faced them all serenely. While this equilibrium was probably only external, I like to imagine that it coincided with his interior dimension. I should emphasise that this serenity made him extremely lucid. Once, as we were parting, he left me with a quote from Pascal: *«L'humilité est raison d'orgueil pour les orgueilleux».* Wise words indeed, particularly for leaders who need the help of others in order to do their job. They mustn't prevaricate, but rather function as the reference point for their team, for all the in-

dividual minds and souls of which it is composed. For this reason I tried to choose my collaborators, not always successfully, from among people I consider more intelligent, more capable, more expert than me, whose judgment is better than mine, thus eliminating the problem of antagonism, for I believe that a team functions better when it's made up of people who are better at their jobs than the boss is. This is the secret to success for governments, businesses, countries, municipalities, perhaps even families. To prevent the implosion of social systems of any kind, starting with the family, one must be wary of the Cronus complex, whereby initiative is suppressed because it risks causing an alternative leadership to emerge that might compromise your own.

[12] Antonio Gramsci (22 January 1891 – 27 April 1937) was an Italian philosopher, writer, politician and political theorist. Founding member and onetime leader of the Communist Party of Italy.

[13] Giovanni Falcone (18 May 1939 – 23 May 1992) was an Italian magistrate who specialised in prosecuting the Sicilian Cosa Nostra. He was killed by the mafia, together with his wife and three of his bodyguards.

[14] Giuseppe Piermarini (18 July 1734 – 18 February 1808) was an Italian architect who trained with Luigi Vanvitelli in Rome and designed the Teatro alla Scala, Milan (1776-78).

[15] Giulio Andreotti (born 14 January 1919) is an Italian politician of the now dissolved centrist Christian Democratic Party who served as prime minister of Italy. Franco Evangelisti (10 February 1923 – 11 November 1993), was a minor political figure of the Christian Democratic Party.

[16] Mediobanca is an Italian investment bank founded by Enrico Cuccia in 1946 to facilitate the post-World War II reconstruction of Italian industry. Vincenzo Maranghi succeeded Cuccia as CEO of Mediobanca.

[17] Jean-Baptiste Colbert (29 August 1619 – 6 September 1683) served as the French minister of finance from 1665 to 1683 under the rule of King Louis XIV.

[18] Endesa, S.A. (Empresa Nacional de Electricidad, S.A.) is the largest electric utility company in Spain and a subsidiary of the Italian utility company ENEL. Suez S.A. was a leading French-based multinational corporation, with operations primarily in water, electricity and natural gas supply, and waste management. The company conducted a merger of equals with fellow utility company Gaz de France on 22 July 2008 to form GDF Suez.

[19] Electricité de France (EDF) is the world's largest utility company. ENEL, AEM and Edison are Italian energy providers. AEM merged in 2007 with ASM Brescia creating A2A.

[20] See note 6.

Chapter 3

Wherein are recounted strange ironies of fate involving the descendants of the revolutions and the heirs of the "little factories"

On 24 March 1999, Jiang Zemin, then president of the People's Republic of China, was received at Palazzo Marino. This episode gives rise to a number of themes, not least your view of this 'new China' as a great emerging economic power with an incredible rate of development but little concern for environmental constraints or social rules. And there is also the issue of respect for civil rights...

First of all, I should mention that Jiang Zemin came to us in Milan after visiting Rome, where the then mayor, Francesco Rutelli, later leader of the *Unione* in the electoral campaign, had publicly criticised precisely these aspects of the Beijing regime[21]. Rutelli's message, although I don't know how accurately, was published in the press. So, in order to make amends and adopt an approach befitting the first citizen of the economic capital – or, as I am fond of saying, mayor of the capital rather than of the Capital – during my private talk with Jiang Zemin I said that I did not agree with my colleague's stance, which amounted to a blanket criticism lacking in any interpretive merit. While identifying with the values of liberty, social progress and the safeguarding of the weakest segments of the population, while defending the

right to form unions and everything our western world may claim as achievements, I understood that a post-communist country such as China was faced with a sort of devil's alternative: unleashing an unregulated market threatened to brutally wipe out the established system, one that was considered stable, albeit unjust, incapable of producing development and tending to spread poverty. It was a familiar scenario, analogous to that of the Russian economy following the collapse of the Soviet Union. But the total and abrupt abolition of a planned economy in China would have created momentous problems… especially in a country with some billion citizens accustomed to a certain lifestyle, a certain discipline. Hence to me the wisest course appeared to be a synthesis, perhaps painful, between the proactivity of a free country and the discipline of a dictatorial regime. I understood – without necessarily agreeing with them – the policies of Jiang Zemin: a progressive course toward a free economy, a society that would one day also become pluralistic, but in gradual steps. The immediate granting of full liberties would have led to anarchy and, given that there are more than a billion Chinese, to global chaos. After the interpreter had translated my thought, I caught a flash of gratification in the otherwise impenetrable gaze of this great mandarin. It was as if I had grasped the nature of his path. Actually, it didn't take a political genius to understand the "devil's alternative" that Beijing was facing, and my prestigious guest recognised the honesty of my judgment. I also observed that the new class of Chinese leaders had sent a clear message by abandoning the uniform of Mao's revolution and adopting western dress. The youngest in the president's entourage spoke fluent English. The gradual transition was also manifesting itself in these exterior signs.

Let's return to the double-digit economic growth rates that could strain our old economies.

The growth in their GDP is certainly impressive, and not just for the double digits, but because in a number of quarters the first digit was actually a two. Furthermore, the dimension of this economy is underestimated: these figures do not refer to a village, a district or to cities like Hong Kong and Shanghai, but to an entire nation. This means that, within a few years, the composition of the G8 will have to be reassessed, otherwise we may find ourselves facing apocalyptic scenarios.

Do you recall what Jim Woolsey, former director of the CIA and father of ECHELON, said about China, off the record, at a dinner at Morton's Steakhouse in Washington?

Yes. With an icy gaze, Jim spoke about a military solution if, by 2012-2015, this country of producers had not also transformed itself into a country of consumers. This is pretty much the global challenge, which obliges us to contemplate the hypothesis of a global conflict if China maintains its rates of GDP growth, production and exports without accompanying this production with an appropriate distribution of wealth – that is, by creating consumer demand. And I mean that not just in terms of consumption of materials, but also consumption of ideals and thus freedom of thought: in the end, democracy is a child of the market, which in turn is the child of the industrial revolution. We might sum it up with a quip, saying that washing machines produced feminists and that industrial progress has permitted the spread of lib-

erty for all. The true revolution, the one that has most greatly changed the world, is the industrial revolution. Three hundred years of industrialisation have done more to change human history than the previous 3,000 years, including, with all respect, the legacy of Jesus Christ. Now, getting back to China, Woolsey's analysis should be seen not so much as the apocalyptic outcome of this challenge, but as a warning both for China and the West.

How does the commercial war that goes on every day between low-cost Chinese products and their western counterparts fit into our discussion? How do we respond to competition that erodes our competitiveness and damages, in particular, small and medium businesses? It brings to mind a dilemma between two "friends". On the one hand we have Cesare Romiti saying that we have to immediately close the gap with other countries by recognising China, investing in it and creating joint ventures. This is certainly a sensible approach, since Italy is both technically and politically behind other countries with regards to China, both as a market and in terms of the delocalisation of our production. On the other hand we have the grim outlook of Jim Woolsey. In practical terms, he is saying: either the Chinese change or, in ten years, we will see the outbreak of a thermonuclear war. Do you see a possible synthesis between Romiti's positivity and Woolsey's negativity, or are they incompatible?

You have already given the answer. I definitely see a synthesis, in the sense that Romiti and Woolsey are addressing the same topic from different standpoints in terms of profile and focus. One is that of the entrepreneur, the other is that of the security expert. One is more generous because he is ac-

customed to taking business risks, the other is more prudent because he feels obliged to account for undesirable consequences. However, the two analyses are unified by a concept theorised by Marx and other Marxist philosophers which is also perfectly valid for us liberals: that of base and superstructure. Economics change society's rationales. When you create a demand for well-being without responding with an adequate supply, a dynamic is inevitably sparked that leads to the redistribution of wealth. This may come about violently, gradually, in a balanced manner, in fits and jerks or smoothly, depending on various conditions and complications. So I have faith that, in this "devil's alternative" I mentioned before, China will also become a nation of consumers. And therefore it is right to invest in developing partnerships, promote the internationalisation of small and medium businesses, and support the investments our entrepreneurs make in such a dynamic territory. Every year in China a million new and well-qualified engineers complete their training and then go on to continue their studies abroad to deepen their knowledge. In Europe we certainly do not turn out 450,000 engineers a year. This is one example of a gap that must be closed.

So, luckily, no atomic bombs. The penetration in Europe is strong both on a commercial level, with low-cost manufacturing that undermines our own with counterfeited products, and in terms of the establishment of large Chinese communities in our cities. The latter is certainly less significant than other waves of immigration we have experienced, but not completely free of illegality, as explained by the then vice mayor Riccardo De Corato in a press conference, when he referred to the arrest in Milan of

Chinese persons involved in prostitution, usury and gambling rackets. How do we respond to these phenomena?

Again, collaborative economic investment cannot be separated from the need for civil liberty and a sensible distribution of wealth. The two things go hand in hand. When we want to export capital, we must also export our social mores so that we can live in a globalised world, where the Chinese can also enjoy the right to work in competitive conditions. At this point everything reaches a new equilibrium in a more harmonious system. There is a field – the Chinese domestic market – where unfair competition has been observed, because there are no environmentalists, trade unions, worker protection schemes or workplace safety measures. As our standards are progressively adopted, this problem will be overcome. As far as the Milanese context is concerned, the Chinese have a longstanding tradition of cohabitation with our city. I would like to mention the founder of Osama, the businessman Mario Tschang. Tschang came to Italy from China with his grandfather in the 1930s, I believe. He took up residence in via Canonica and was the representative for the housewares division of our family business in the 1950s. He then acquired and relaunched Osama, a large office supplies company, on the international stage. Now it actually sponsors sailing regattas. This is the extraordinary characteristic of the Chinese in Milan, and indeed of other foreigners in our city. Unblinded by prejudice, Milan has this great capacity to take in and metabolise foreign elements. And you can become Milanese even if you have almond-shaped eyes – you just have to respect the rules and work tenaciously. This Mr. Tschang, whom I later met together with the mu-

nicipal authorities, has become a great successful Milanese entrepreneur. Of course, compared with the 1950s, there is a much greater migratory influx today, although this is true for all nationalities. And with this we have also witnessed a spread of the conditions often associated with immigration that foster criminal behaviour. For the Chinese it is a more autochthonous phenomenon, regulated by internal mechanisms of the community. The effect on society at large is significant but hidden, partially because, like honourable Chinese, they are alert and smart enough to deal with important things in a more appropriate manner and leave the grunt work to others. The same thing is not seen with other groups who are more explicitly involved in predatory crime and thus more visible, although perhaps less well organised. Hence our attention and preparedness regarding this phenomenon cannot be relaxed or lowered. But I maintain the idea that the Chinese community in Milan, while tainted with some illicit aspects, has a consolidated history of mutualism with our city, not least in topographical terms.

A final thought on your impressions of Shanghai and Beijing which you visited in November 2005, and in particular, your memories of the foreign minister, Li Zhaoxing?

I saw a lot of things in China, but the one that made the greatest impression concerned the effort to bring together years of planned economy with the market. It was my visit to CELAP in Shanghai, a sort of public administration academy similar to ENA in France. Initially I had not thought much of this appointment, considering it a relatively unimportant affair. In reality it turned out to be much more

meaningful than others in terms of helping me understand what was happening in China in those years. While limited in terms of space and time, the visit to CELAP provided a clear explanation of their way of thinking, their rationale and strategy. The dean of the university, professor Xi Jie Ren, whose CV I read on my way to the conference, had been a distinguished Marxist theorist and, as a result of his doctrinal erudition, a well-ensconced Party leader. This gentleman had transformed a school for the Communist Party into a business administration academy for top managers with the goal of teaching the rules of the market to those who had been Party bureaucrats, the red mandarins. And he was succeeding – I found fully competent managers who were open to internationalisation and entrepreneurial processes. The location was also appropriate: architecture is always a synonym or expression of a civilisation because it synthesises the many figurative art forms and visually expresses a thought, a moment in social history or a political line. All regimes have made use of it: from the Roman Empire to the neoclassicism of Napoleon and Frederick II, and in Italy the umbertine style of the late 19th century and, later, the rationalist style of the fascist period. CELAP is a sort of large red desk built by a French architect, an example of ultra-contemporary architecture of unimaginable dimensions whose legs amount, more or less, to two of our Bicoccas[22]. The top of this desk is composed of an enormous rectilinear volume of glass and steel in which thousands of future managers are trained. In short, it is a sort of ark that carries these gentlemen from post-communism to a market economy. Or, if you prefer, the vehicle for a new Long March.

Another extremely gratifying moment during my visit

was my conversation with the foreign minister, who struck me for his likeability, affability, humour and humanity. He regretted not being able to read Dante in the original language, having only known it in Chinese translation. He also surprised me with a number of apt quotes from Boccaccio.

Apt quotes, since they were made while discussing the delicate question of SARS and bird flu...

We had the thankless task of excusing ourselves for the decision in 2004 to cancel a performance by La Scala theatre company in Beijing. But Zhaoxing proved to be very understanding, actually joking about it and making a suggestive reference to the plague in *The Decameron*. In the end he was generous toward our city and, when you think about it, by receiving me he was paying a great honour to Milan. This was what I took away from my days in China: the great interest, respect and attention with which the Chinese followed our western example of public administration. It was interesting to see it in such a distant country, albeit one which is coming closer to us in many ways, starting with links between our economies and businesses. This was my image of distant China, reminding me of a famous film by Godard, in which distant objectives are filtered through numerous conceptual lenses. And yet, as I was saying, I found and was able to understand, some years later, a society moving along a well-marked path with their eyes firmly fixed on the destination, moving at an aggressive pace yet tempered by a wisdom that embraces history, social practicability and economic development.

A great opportunity, produced partially by the civility and wisdom of the Chinese. What comparison might you make between Russia and China, two countries that have moved or are moving from a planned economy to a market economy?

There are unquestionably large differences, not least because, objectively speaking, they are countries whose histories are in some respects contiguous and interchangeable and in others very different. The Soviet Union broke up and imploded traumatically. I was acquainted with the Soviet Union in that period. Before I had assumed any institutional role I witnessed what happened in the years of Gorbachev and Yeltsin, and later I personally visited the Russian Federation of Putin. In China, the transition of the social classes at the helm of the economy is taking place in a much less traumatic manner, while nevertheless maintaining unprecedented growth rates. If I have to express my judgment as to the capacity to govern, I would say that the Chinese have proven, so far at least, to be far more capable.

Staying in the Far East, but moving to the south-east Asian countries, a curious event occurred on 30 May 2000: the then vice mayor of Milan, Riccardo De Corato, received – during the only meeting where you were not personally present – the secretary general of the Vietnamese Communist party, Le Kha Phieu, the equivalent of a head of government.

The vice-mayor receiving the successor to Ho Chi Minh, another great revolutionary of the 20th century, at Palazzo Marino was a bona fide Dantean *contrappasso*. But I had to leave for Moscow to meet with the newly-elected president, Vladimir Putin, and had made an deal with Riccardo: I

would undertake the mission to visit Lenin's heir and he would meet with Ho Chi Minh's. There was a scent of history in the simultaneous occurrence of the two meetings and the centrality of Milan and its representatives. I found the moment gratifying not only because of my boyish love for films shot in Vietnam such as *Apocalypse Now*, but also because the reception of Phieu in our city demonstrated just how hospitable and open to the world Milan is. Furthermore, both meetings were tinged with irony. De Corato, like me, had never dreamt of participating in one of those anti-American demonstrations against "imperialist" U.S. expansionism. Given our sympathies, which are no secret, Riccardo and I had even fantasised about receiving our guest wearing cufflinks from the White House. For obvious diplomatic reasons we refrained from doing so. In truth, those meetings represented a double *contrappasso*: in Moscow, I, the former president of Federmeccanica – that is, the principal representative of the owners of Italy's heavy industries and historical adversary of workers' unions – received nothing less than the Order of Lenin, transformed into the more innocuous Order of Friendship. In Milan, De Corato, ex-member of the Italian Social Movement, later regenerated and transformed thanks to Fiuggi mineral water – and I say that with warm respect for an incomparable collaborator – received, in his institutional capacity, the most important heir of the Charlies. I came to the conclusion that the cold war had truly ended[23].

Let's dwell a little longer on Saigon and talk about another, almost paranormal episode: your visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington.

I would not hesitate to define this event as paranormal, and it left me quite perplexed at the time. It is hard for me not to attribute some supernatural message to it. I was walking that day in front of the very long monument that commemorates and celebrates over 50,000 Americans who died in Vietnam. At a certain point, a member of my staff said: "Let's see if there are any Albertini." I turned around and, as if drawn to those names engraved into the black stone, I pointed them out immediately. This was the first surprising moment. The second was that the two I had picked out, James, nicknamed "Jimmy", and Joseph, who went by "Joe", were born on the same day, 30 September 1947, and were more or less my age. They died, about four months apart, at the end of 1967 and the beginning of 1968. How do you explain the extraordinary fact of stopping and finding, right there at eye level, two names out of 50,000? Even though the stone is black and the names not easily read, we register a series of messages in our subconscious, and then perhaps we get a flash of illumination.

What else do we know about these Albertini?

Our research turned up touching and analogous stories. Obviously both were Italian-Americans, young students shipped off to Vietnam. One came from California, the other from Massachusetts. They were born on the same day, and both were corporals in the army. Jimmy was killed in action and Joe died because he stepped on a land mine.

This story can be thought of as a coincidence. But it is also linked to another thing that happened one summer when I spent a few days of vacation in Selva di Val Gardena

as a guest of the Carabinieri[24]. As I was returning home, I decided to follow the "wine road" through the Trentino. As I passed through a small town, whose name unfortunately escapes me, I decided to stop and look around. I paused in the main square in front of the monument to the fallen in the First and Second World Wars. There was a list of names, all German except for two that were Italian. And they were both Albertini. I didn't check their birthdates, but if they had both been born on 30 September I might have believed it was a sort of omen… perhaps of the date of my own death… 30 September of some upcoming year which, like "1947", has digits that add up to the prime number "3": 2010, 2019, 2028, 2037…

Let's get back to the institutional meetings, and more specifically those of 2 June 2000. What occurred in the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory?

Let me start with events leading up to the encounter with Vladimir Putin, newly-elected president of the Russian Federation, and that will frame it. I should point out that they gave me the stimulus, shortly thereafter, to make the proposal that would melt the icy gaze of the former head of the KGB for the German Democratic Republic.

In that period, something had happened that had a negative impact on relations between the Italian prime minister Massimo D'Alema and Milan. I had called him to propose a visit, either by myself or with Cardinal Martini, to ask that the offices of our control agency, improperly called an *authority*, of the Third Sector (also known as the Voluntary Sector) be located in Milan, since the city was the capital of

non-profit world activities. I envisaged housing the central agency in the noble space of Palazzo Carmagnola, and had given the issue much thought. Unfortunately, due to resistance from the government in Rome, it did not happen. At the end of May I left for Moscow, having been informed by the Russian ambassador Nikolai Nikolaevich Spassky, that I would be meeting with the successor to Lenin and Stalin. And so I had the idea of putting a small plan into action as a sort of response to that institutional – and, if you will, also personal – "slap in the face" from Palmiro Togliatti's successor[25]. D'Alema at the time – and this is perhaps another paradox of history – did not seem to realise that the entire communist system had fallen along with the Berlin Wall.

At this point, another one of those *contrappassi* occurred, thanks to the invisible hand of market justice. On the plane I was trying to come up with something to say to Putin to convince him of our good intentions and the gratitude and recognition for the great honour he granted to our city and to those who govern it by receiving me in Moscow and then choosing Milan for his first visit abroad as president.

The Russians, so careful in diplomatic affairs, must have had a big thorn in their side to choose a meeting with the mayor of a centre-right city as their first encounter with Italian governmental institutions.

Certainly, but we also have to recall that there is a great and longstanding tradition of economic and cultural exchange with our city. Putin also wanted to send a message of support to Berlusconi. At that time, Milan was like the River Jordan of John the Baptist, a sort of outpost for all those who

foresaw the Advent. And so there was also this investment in the future, a bit like the letter to George W. Bush.

Of which we will speak a little later.

So, getting back to the *contrappasso*, I really liked the idea of giving Russia what had been refused by Rome. Although I was greatly disappointed that neither the offices of Consob nor the authority for the voluntary sector would, for now, be set up in the palazzo of the Count of Carmagnola, a Renaissance adventurer. As mentioned, on the evening of 2 June we were at the Moscow Conservatory for a concert by the Scala Philharmonic, impressively conducted by maestro Riccardo Muti. Putin, thanks to the kind efforts of Ettore Volontieri, was courteous enough to invite me backstage, where I found him with his wife and an interpreter. I was accompanied by the Italian ambassador, Giancarlo Aragona. Putin struck me as a man with an inscrutable, nearly expressionless mien. I was a bit awed, because my previous experience with this type of encounter was limited, in truth, to a few films. Plus, he had just been elected and was largely unknown. The situation reminded me of John Le Carré's *Karla* trilogy. In any case, the message reached me that the president wanted to meet me and had some thoughts for me and for Milan. Hardly pausing for breath, Putin announced that four days later he was coming to town. I responded formally, saying that I could not find the words to express my gratitude for having been received, and especially for the announcement of his imminent visit. Precisely because I was not able to find the appropriate words, I decided I would express myself with a deed, in keeping with the Milanese

style. I offered the Russian Federation a public, municipal, renovated building in the historic centre of Milan to serve as the premises for a foundation whose task would be to represent and promote the Russian economy. It was a way to relaunch relations between our two countries. At this point, while I was speaking and the interpreter was translating, I noticed that this impenetrable visage was undergoing a metamorphosis, to the point where, once I had finished, I found a completely different person in front of me. His face had lit up. All my preconceptions – Lenin, Beria, Karla – had vanished and I felt I was with a carefree, cordial student with a broad, open smile. He said incredible things. In spite of the fact that my proposal flouted protocol – it was the first time I had mentioned it and the ambassadors Spassky and Aragona had not been informed – he immediately understood that it was a genuine offer, an authentic and heartfelt gesture. He said, "It is something I completely agree with, and I thank you. I feel this is a sign. Since my time as vice-mayor of St. Petersburg, I have loved Milan. I will give immediate orders to the foreign minister to ensure this proposal is pursued." A week later, the letter arrived containing their acceptance of the constitution of the Fondazione Italia-Russia. This goes to show that sometimes the tsarist, and later communist bureaucracies, the ones we are accustomed to reading about in their great works of literature, are not all that bad. Even from dusty files, languishing like dead souls, a flash of brilliance may spring forth.

So the Tsar acted with an edict, an ukase*, the music changed and everyone started dancing to his tune?*

That really impressed me. He didn't consult with anyone,

and yet the thing was pursued. Such speed complicated things more for us than for him, because we were the ones who had the problem of keeping our end of the bargain, getting a renovated building ready and available in just a few months. But we succeeded, and in March 2001 we inaugurated the new offices of the Fondazione Italia-Russia with the Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov in attendance, who honored me with the Order of Friendship, formerly the Order of Lenin.

On 16 June 2000, in the Sala Alessi of Palazzo Marino, an event took place that brought together Putin and Italy's most important entrepreneurs.

The press conference was televised all over the world. Just 15 days after his election, Putin came to Milan because he wanted Italy and Europe to understand that, unlike his predecessors, he would preside over economic legality. When he laid out the economic conditions and his plans for reform, I was struck by how fitting his words were for the milieu and style of the conference. He wanted untainted capital to flow into Russia and capable entrepreneurs to hear him, and here he was addressing the most appropriate of audiences. When he made a reference to Rosario Alessandrello, top manager of Technimont and future president of the Fondazione Italia-Russia, we were all struck by his personal approach. He said, "Alessandrello is also our friend" and I turned toward Rosario and thought, "Alessandrello, who *are* you?" I still kid him about this because the proclamation took everyone by surprise. Getting back to Putin, he made a pledge that, under his guidance, his country would recover an economic

liberty compatible with post-communism, without making any concessions to illegality, organised crime, certain oligarchs or those cliques, perhaps originating in his own secret service, who had handled the shift to post-communism in the unscrupulous way we are all familiar with.

I spoke with Gianni Letta[26] during Putin's conference and he told me that he had been impressed by the fact that the Russian president had given orders that only the mayor of Milan, and no other authority, would appear in the television broadcasts… sure, a bit behind and hidden, but still visible. From a human point of view, Putin confirmed my first impressions: he had a dual personality, capable of implacable determination and iciness, marked by ontological cynicism, but he also expressed genuine humanity, generosity and openness depending on the situation and whom he was talking to. It seemed that two different people lived in one, but they cohabited within well-defined rules, something physiological rather than pathological.

During this speech, some of your colleagues were playing with the famous Russian 'red telephone', placed in a room not far from the admiral who had the attaché case containing the codes to the Russian nuclear arsenal.

Yes, that was another amusing episode… because later we also found the room with the admiral. We even took pictures. Then as a joke, someone referred to one of my favorite movies, *Dr. Strangelove*, where the American president, played by Peter Sellers, has an absolutely hilarious phone conversation with his Soviet colleague:

"Dimitri, look, […] I guess you're just going to have to

get that plane." We tried out the buttons on the phone. "What's this button for?" someone said. "Wow, it's actually Washington…", said another. We were having great fun, open to this new experience without prejudice or precendent. For just a moment we were immersed in a spy story. And there was another amusing and paradoxical detail: Putin's microphones didn't work, which was rather disconcerting considering that we were in the Italian capital of technology.

So you were awarded the Russian Order of Friendship and then, a few months later, you were made a Knight of the British Empire. How are these two honours reconciled?

First, I would like to use my three encounters with the leaders of China, Vietnam and Russia as examples of Milan's most defining characteristic: it is a city that manages to be successful in spite of all the biases and tensions that divide human souls. Milan is capable of taking in, metabolising and putting to use the different expressions of history, economics and society. Being the workshop for Italian trends, Milan cannot draw back from indulging its curiosity to know, be known, take in and integrate.

This brings to mind, by association of ideas, the fact that Sergio Cofferati was made a Knight of the French Legion of Honour. He had not yet been elected mayor of Bologna and was still the secretary of the CGIL[27]. Stefano Parisi proposed that I send him a warm note expressing my opinion that it was right and proper that he received the highest honour stemming from the French Revolution, while I, harking from a slightly more conservative sphere, was dubbed Knight

of the British Empire. This habit of recalling the honours pinned to my breast is obviously a joke. There are those who collect toy soldiers; I amuse myself a bit with medals. It is a form of self-mockery, a conscious and playful vanity.

To conclude our exchange about the president of the Russian Federation, may I ask your impression of Mrs. Putin, Ludmilla, whom you met on two different occasions?

Ludmilla Putin: our paths first met on that "historic" evening in June 2000 backstage at La Scala with her husband. She gave me the impression of being a very modern woman compared with other wives of Soviet and post-Soviet leaders. In brief, she looked like a woman who could easily have been the first lady in some western country. She is quite a connoisseur of music. We spoke about the conductor Valery Gergiev and about the Putins' cultural interests, with Riccardo Muti also joining in the conversation.

In September 2000 maestro Gergiev was honoured with the Ambrogino d'Oro and his friendship with the Putin family undoubtedly encouraged the president's fondness for Milan.

Yes, he was one of the "ambassadors" of this friendship. At any rate, I noted a strong bond between the presidential couple and the complementary role played by Mrs. Putin: she did not stay in her husband's shadow, nor did she overexpose herself. She was a companion, the wife of a head of state, capable of fulfilling her role with poise and balance: a fitting amount of public exposure and enough private life to suit a woman who is not a queen, but the wife of a president. Her cultural and musical interests indicated to me a very cultured

woman. I met her again some years later in Milan. It was June 2005 during a programme of cultural exchanges between Milan and Moscow. That was followed by an event at the Piccolo Teatro with a speech by the then education minister Letizia Moratti and by Berlusconi's personal secretary, Valentino Valentini. The Russian children were performing the story of Pinocchio. I made a bet with Mrs. Putin on that occasion: I said that I was introducing her to the future mayor of Milan, Letizia Moratti, and she promised that if this turned out to be true, she would return to Milan in homage to the city's first woman mayor.

One more person, also quite unusual: the mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov.

He was a truly unique figure. The first image that comes to mind is that of Nikita Khrushchev, whom he physically resembles, and although I never met the Soviet leader personally, I imagine them sharing the same mannerisms. In the film *Enemy at the Gates*, there is an actor who plays the young Khrushchev, then a political commissar during the battle of Stalingrad. Luzhkov gave me the same impression: a capable interpreter of Leninist duplicity, able to adapt to situations that must have conflicted with his own cultural and ideological background. In his youth he had been an orthodox communist, a technician of large state companies, I believe. During Putin's electoral campaign for the Kremlin there had been some differences of opinion that Luzhkov brilliantly glossed over. Thus I considered him a man of great ability. There was an apparent lack of style in his appearance that he recovered in dialogue, revealing a lucidity, wisdom,

astuteness and thorough knowledge of the instruments of power and the main dossiers of a mayor. Let us not forget the consensus he managed to obtain and the works he achieved in a metropolis such as Moscow. It cannot have been easy to hold at bay the unscrupulous interests of both western capitalists and the new bourgeoisie of the oligarchs. Lastly, he is a man with a great flair for communication and a love of sport. Let me just mention the numberless soccer matches in which he took part, including the one against the Palazzo Marino team, captained by our city commissioners, or his driving a Ferrari on the Monza track or his plunge each winter into the Moscow River. He called to mind – and I say this with warmth and admiration – a walrus: his physique, his courage, his waistline and an impressive cardiovascular capacity.

[21] Francesco Rutelli, MP (born 14 June 1954) is an Italian politician and current president of Alliance for Italy.
[22] The theater of Bicocca aka 'Teatro degli Arcimboldi' was inaugurated by Gabriele Albertini in 2002.
[23] The Italian Social Movement (MSI), later Italian Social Movement–National Right (*Movimento Sociale Italiano–Destra Nazionale*, MSI–DN), was a neo-fascist and, later, national-conservative political party in Italy formed in 1946. The party was dissolved in January 1995, at the conference of Fiuggi, in a famous thermal bath location.
[24] The Arma dei Carabinieri (Corps of Carabineers) is the national gendarmerie of Italy, policing both the military and civilian populations.
[25] Palmiro Togliatti (26 March 1893 - 21 August 1964) was an Italian politician, the leader of the Italian Communist Party from 1927 until his death in 1964.
[26] Gianni Letta (born 15 April 1935) is an Italian politician, member of the Forza Italia party.
[27] Sergio Cofferati (born 30 January 1948) is an Italian politician, and has been secretary general of the trade union CGIL and mayor of Bologna. The Italian General Confederation of Labour (CGIL) is a national trade union, influenced by the Italian Communist Party and its successors.

Chapter 4

Wherein it is discussed whether the heirs of Julius Caesar still live in London.

In this chapter and the next, we will address the Anglo-Saxon world. And I would like to begin with its most authoritative representative: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. We could say that you are one of her faithful subjects, having been honoured with the title of Knight Commander in the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire in October 2000.

Queen Elizabeth's visit was a truly meaningful moment: it was the second visit during my tenure of a great head of state to Milan. I had prepared for this encounter with some trepidation: notions of protocol, no questions, absolutely no physical contact and other things as well. It all turned out to be quite complicated, but we soon realised that the Queen was perfectly affable and in no way a stickler for ceremony. Not at all in line with all the advice given to me the previous day. When I received her at the entrance of La Scala, she greeted me with spontaneous enthusiasm. The master of protocol introduced me as the mayor and president of La Scala. Her Majesty expressed surprise at the coexistence of the two roles. The same surprise was even more evident in Prince Philip, who is perhaps unaccustomed to doing several jobs simultaneously. The prince made a spirited quip when he saw Minister Enrico Letta, who had met his plane a couple of hours earlier at the airport[28]. I be-

lieve he said: "So now you've been promoted to minister of culture" (previously he had been introduced as minister of industry). Another priceless little episode occurred as we entered the royal box and one of our entourage told the prince consort that he would be sitting next to the Queen. Philip responded, "How surprising!", as if to say, *never in my life have I actually been next to the Queen, but always one step behind.* Fantastic! I cannot hide what a unique moment that was for me, standing next to this head of state, the hereditary queen of the British empire, and listening to the two national anthems. This was followed by a beautiful performance, with music that was both sober and solemn, quite fitting for the circumstance. Afterwards we headed for maestro Muti's dressing room. In the entrance corridor, I had enough sense to block our guests' view of some photographs hanging on the wall showing damage suffered by La Scala during the World War II. In the tiny space of the maestro's dressing room – as it was before the restoration of the theatre – the Queen conversed with the conductor, received the gift of a book, and met the Muti family. At a certain point, I uttered the phrase I had been practicing in my poor English, offering to withdraw and leave the sovereign alone with the maestro. With subtle expression in her eyes and words to the effect of "It isn't necessary, you may stay", the Queen again exhibited her innate grace. I believe that she also meant to thank me for my discretion, my desire to withdraw and not take up space, since I had already had my time with them.

I witnessed the same manifestation of regal grace the following day – and have a beautiful photograph of the event – in Piazza San Fedele when we went together to greet the children at the British School of Milan. The students were waving the Union Jack and among them was a young girl who was in-

sistently asking questions and addressing the Queen in a discourteous manner. And so, while the Queen consented to shake hands with other students, she ignored this rude child. At that moment I understood the truly authentic quality of Her Majesty, something I had also perceived in her appreciation of the performance at La Scala. She had said, "Thank you very much indeed for this lovely evening." The following day, she came to Palazzo Marino and I met her in Piazza della Scala, where I showed her the recently restored pavement. Entering the palazzo, I told her something of its history and who Marino had been: a merchant who came to Milan, made his fortune as a banker and then became the main liaison with the Spanish aristocracy. I explained how, over the course of the centuries, the palazzo had become a seat of city government. Another small anecdote that merits mention was a gift we made to her: a 19th-century reproduction of Leonardo's drawings. She responded by saying that she would have kept it among the dearest gifts in her collection. Then I learned that the royal library of Windsor has Leonardo's most important originals!

I introduced her to an array of authorities, including Silvio Berlusconi and Roberto Formigoni, president of Lombardy. In Berlusconi's case, we were making a bit of an exception to protocol, taking a bit of political license so to speak, because he had not yet become prime minister and was still the leader of the opposition. We then went to the Sala Alessi, where all the city's notables had gathered, ranging from members of the city council to the many British residents of Milan[29]. It was quite a large crowd, everyone was standing and the situation probably corresponded little to protocol. I felt a bit embarrassed at the time, not so much for possible security problems, but mainly for questions of decorum. But the Queen shook hands

with nearly everyone in spite of the buzzing voices and the large number of people present. And this is precisely the stuff of kings: the capability to gracefully adapt to less-than-ideal circumstances. A word for everyone, an exchange of cordialities. Then the Prince of Edinburgh arrived, after his visit to the Agusta-Westland helicopter factory. I was struck by the simplicity of the Queen's questions: "Was it tiring? Did you see anything interesting or amusing?"

"Yes, rather," responded Philip, "Now we are going to visit the Prefecture."

"Everything is fine here," replied the Queen, "The atmosphere was most cordial."

This brief exchange revealed the intimate, almost bourgeois, everyday dimension of the British monarchs.

I wanted to ask about two other occasions involving the royal family: a more recent encounter with Prince Andrew and then the visit to Saint Paul's cathedral for a service to honour the Order of the British Empire.

Three things struck me about Prince Andrew. First of all, the firmness of his handshake and the speed with which he climbed the stairs, showing the physical prowess of an athlete. He is a prince, a soldier and a sportsman. I think he is also a body builder or, at any rate, dedicated to fitness. I believe that as a young man he was a helicopter pilot and he has conserved that physique. In the evening, at a dinner hosted by the British Chamber of Commerce, he produced a series of quips, exhibiting his highly refined British humour. I was also surprised by his curiosity and competence in issues of urban transportation and traffic. He was well informed regarding the congestion

charge, although tending to oppose it. We exchanged opinions on the issue and I told him that I had visited my colleague, the mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, a few days after the inauguration of the new city hall designed by Norman Foster, with Andrew's august mother in attendance.

We will get back to Livingstone's congestion charge and also Foster's work. But what was Prince Andrew's comment regarding the invitation to La Scala?

I have always been amazed at the oratorical talents of the British ruling class, despite the interspersion of a studied form of stuttering, something Indro Montanelli explained to me. The great Indro told me that there are actually British clubs where, in order to be accepted among the ranks of excellence, one has to learn how to stutter. Or better, assume the most natural yet affected demeanour possible. This all serves to avoid embarrassing or contradicting one's interlocutor. Hence the recommendation to begin your phrases with a "Well, I don't…" In short, there is always a sort of gurgling in the diction in order to not seem contradictory. Regarding the prince, he began by saying (more or less): "Yes, it is my pleasure to be here at the 80th anniversary celebration of the Chamber of Commerce. It was kind of you to invite me. However, I cannot deny that I am also here this evening to thank the mayor for having found the time to receive me today. He also invited me to opening night at La Scala. A few months ago they invited my mother, who could not come. Then they invited my brother, who also could not come. And now here I am in Milan and I too have been invited to opening night at La Scala: and, surprise, I too cannot attend. But just to get an idea, I asked to

visit La Scala. I was told it was not possible because the conductor was rehearsing and the renovation work had to be completed on time…" Hence, what threatened to be a gaffe led instead to a moment of great wry wit and good cheer. On the face of it, it might have seemed a form of protest, a complaint. Instead it was an elegant way of poking fun at their protocol and ours, with a level of style and taste befitting a true British prince. It was a great lesson.

Let's talk about the ceremony in Saint Paul's cathedral in May 2004.

First of all, that cathedral is a pantheon of the heroes that populate literature and cinema: the sacred resting place of Wellington, Montgomery and Mountbatten, not to mention Kitchener and Gordon of Khartoum. In short, the entire British Empire is there. And this leads to my first thought: from the industrial revolution to the World War II, the British Empire has represented a civilisation that can only be compared with the Roman Empire. It did not endure for such a long time because, in the modern world, the succession of events is much faster compared with the millennial progress of ancient history. With technological progress, society evolves at an extremely rapid pace. My grandfather watched an American put his foot on the moon on live television, while as a child he read in the newspapers about the first flight by the Wright brothers. In just 60 years, technology made all this possible. The rule of the proletariat had been announced as an "everlasting institution", to be compared with the Catholic church, and instead it lasted 75 years, less than the Albertini company. The millennial Reich fell after 13 short years.

The history of the British Empire was written on the tombs

and monuments in the cathedral. With those persons, that aplomb, that solemn, unhaughty pride, without any ostentatious display, but almost liturgical in style, the secular and religious aspects intermixed with extraordinary perfection and class. And I, a non-British, proud of my badge as Knight Commander of the British Empire, which other Italians scorned as worthless foreign coinage, was an emotional participant in the silences and harmonious singing. There were 2,000 people expressing the unity of the British Empire in one harmonious choir. Sure, this was an elite; I did not notice any Manchester United hooligans. But it allowed me to understand what it means to be proud of one's empire and its civilising effect on the world. The pride of being there and being what they are. At the same time you could feel the respect for common manners, how one behaves at the table or in church, how one moves or queues in the underground. Perhaps respect for accepting a limit to one's own freedom or power as an individual, to one's autonomy, in favor of the collective good, as happened in the case of the congestion charge, and identifying with this sign of the civility of the empire. Since this last principle is universal, or in any case associated with western civilisation generally, I did not feel at all out of place. I am Italian and have nothing against my roots. I believe Italy is a marvellous country, but if I had to choose a nationality other than my own, I would like to be a British citizen. It would give me a feeling of certainty, even more than if I were German or American. Even though now we might say that the correct translation of *civis romanus sum* is "I am American", the British civilisation is a much deeper one. Hence, on that occasion, I felt sincerely moved. It was a true privilege to be able to take part in that ceremony.

Let's talk about the congestion charge, a measure that was not implemented in Milan, where instead a pollution charge was preferred.

Given that he represents the left, Livingstone paradoxically applied, in true British style, the most important of liberal principles. He began by regulating parking for residents, street by street, using referendums to assess public support, especially agreement for the principle that the small amount of available space in the centre of town should be paid for. The new mayor of Milan could have implemented a congestion charge; we had prepared the entire setup to allow it. Our electronic traffic control system, costing 192 million euros, for which we received financing of 23 million euros from the EU, makes it possible to monitor access to the city and how traffic is channelled through it. A very modest investment would have allowed Letizia Moratti to institute a congestion charge or an "access charge" at the most suitable access points around the circle of the Bastioni[30]. However, prior to reaching this decision, it would have been opportune to make a number of preparatory steps: a parking plan, regulated parking in all neighbourhoods, parking charges to residents and the enhancement of the public transportation system. Borrowing the model applied in London would have brought, as Mayor Livingstone explained it to me, at least three positive outcomes. First of all, in keeping with the basic criteria of political economy, the use of a financial lever to influence behaviour that was either to be promoted or discouraged. It would thus be made clear and agreed that the use of a scarce resource – such as space, or one such as air that is abused to the point of becoming unhealthy for the city dwellers because of pollution – should be regulated by a charge.

This way we would discourage damaging behaviour and receive some kind of indemnity for it. And this would not be an episodic thing, like traffic-free Sundays or the even-odd license plate measure, but a permanent and structural solution. The second benefit would be improvement in public transportation made possible by the income from the charge. It would have paid for a kilometre of new subway line per year. We had calculated, assuming an access charge of three euros per vehicle, proceeds of some 100 million euros per year to be invested in the development of the public transportation system. The third and last effect is that of the immediate reduction of urban traffic congestion and air pollution.

I have three good reasons for asking you to comment on three other issues: it is curious and paradoxical that good ideas can be shared despite conflicting ideologies, given that "Red Ken" Livingstone, mayor of London, made no mystery of his political credo; the second regards the thought that something like a congestion charge perhaps works in London because the British are more respectful of rules than the Italians; the third regards your impression of the place where you met the mayor, the new town hall designed by Norman Foster.

"Red Ken" gave me the impression of being a wise and determined man, and one who had the solution in his pocket. Indeed, the polls showed public opinion shifting from predominantly hostile to predominantly supportive (from 60-40 to 40-60 percent). He explained that public opinion changed when Londoners understood what was being done with the money coming in from the "access tax", and thus grasped the liberal rather than dictatorial aspects of the measure.

Regarding the second issue of the attitude of the British, what you say is true: although it should be mentioned that the approach taken to regulating city parking, while somewhat authoritarian, also contained participatory elements, because the proposition that parking would be regulated on your street, in your neighbourhood, was put to a referendum among Londoners. Precisely because people were convinced that the principal would be enforced, the majority of residents voted in favor of paying for parking in exchange for the reasonable certainty of being able to find a parking place for their cars. If something has a value, it is right and proper that it be paid for. It would have been a disaster to force residents to pay for parking if they were then unable to find parking places because the prohibition against non-residents was not enforced properly.

Lastly, Norman Foster's town hall. The Queen inaugurated it and we were the first foreign delegation to visit it, as Livingstone told us. Of all the architects I have known, Foster is the one who has made the strongest impression on me both as a person and for his architectural style. I find the way he conceives space wonderful, the way he uses such modern and innovative tools and materials with unfettered creativity and a keen sense of efficiency. He is almost more engineer than architect. His skyscrapers are vertical cities, where advantage is taken of winds and incoming radiation to produce energy and create the best possible living conditions. Then I saw the London stations, which are absolute beauties. And I mustn't forget his masterpiece, the Reichstag in Berlin, which embraces a century of history: the fire, the signatures of the Soviet soldiers and finally the modern part. At the entrance we were greeted by our friend Schily, the German minister of the interior, who acted as our guide.

Getting back to the congestion charge, the psychological attitude of the Milanese was rather different from that of the British. There was heated opposition almost immediately.

Yes, and below any acceptable level of common sense. They did not even want to consider it, they did not want to discuss the issue and thus we squandered the only real possibility for addressing the problem of traffic. In modern metropolitan areas, you cannot resolve the problem of scarcity of space by taking refuge in a distant time, that of the good savage, that is not even a real piece of history. In Italy, some have an atavistic aversion to industrialisation and progress. They do not take into account that industrialisation and progress have eradicated plagues, famine and illiteracy. This is not even Marxism, but pre-Marxism. And in any case it is a mindset that is not confined exclusively to the left. These people do not understand that the complex phenomena of industrial and post-industrial urban gigantism can be governed using equitable and reasonable methods, that it is possible to live with development. Development is deleterious if poorly managed, but if resources are directed to measures that compensate the damage, we can go forward without being forced to erase the reality in which we now live.

In those nine years, you also had the chance to meet both John Major and Tony Blair, two residents of Downing Street.

Meeting Major, the heir of Margaret Thatcher, in a restaurant cannot have been a matter of chance. In the dispute with the Milan traffic police, we were inspired by the privatisation carried out by the "Iron Lady". We imitated her intransigent determination in opposing the striking miners in Wales.

The meeting with Tony Blair was not a chance event either, given that in August 2004 you spent an entire day as the guest of the Strozzi Guicciardini with whom the British prime minister was staying on holiday.

Yes, and I was able to get to know him more intimately precisely because he was in his summer version. That encounter, facilitated by Ambassador Vento, a neighbour of Princess Irina Strozzi Guicciardini, is memorable for the friendliness of the guests and the delightful setting in a Tuscan park of rare beauty. And it is also memorable for the prime minister's affability, forthright cordiality, lucidity and ability to grasp the simple essence of things. Just a few days earlier, he had been a guest of Berlusconi in Sardinia, and was in fact there when the famous episode of the bandana took place. I often smile at Blair's story of his arrival by boat. He saw people on the dock waiting to receive him. He was still too far out to recognise faces, but he noted one in particular, not particularly tall but physically robust, with a bandana on his head. He initially thought it was a bodyguard, then thought that it might be someone else, before finally distinguishing the features of the prime minister, exclaiming "Oh my God!" under is breath.

What did you talk about over breakfast with Blair?

Different things. There was the Iranian question that saw our government and the British allied in the effort to convince the United States to take a less intransigent position. The elections had not yet occurred that would usher in the extremist current president of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

I was also struck by the vivacity of Blair's son, his intelli-

gence, alert gaze, and the efficient bodyguard who followed him like a shadow. Blair's naturalness also impressed me, that of a world leader who would later be reelected by a wide margin. At the same time he had a very informal mien, much more spontaneous than Clinton or Schröder.

Of the four world leaders who unfortunately suffered terrorist attacks at home – Bush, Aznar, Putin and Blair – the latter is the one who sent a message to his people that was both more serene and more intransigent. There was none of Bush's agitation, Aznar's collapse, or Putin's iciness. It was a masterpiece of political communication in an emergency. But perhaps this too is natural for the British. Just think of Winston Churchill's statement at the height of hardship, in the summer of 1940: "We shall never surrender!"

Blair interrupted the G8, held a press conference, and returned to London. In one of the most tragic moments for the West, he found the poise to explain to his people, using all the media at his disposal, the values of western civilisation and how they can never be bent by terrorist attacks. He masterfully exorcised the true power of terrorists. It is not the dead, but the fear they generate that empowers them. The death they bring to our children, while painful, is insignificant on a military level. The professionals of death, the great dictators of the 20th century, killed millions while the victims of terrorist attacks are but a handful. However, they have a devastating effect on people's minds, on our habits, on our most delicate neurons, that single square millimetre of our brain that conditions our fear response. Think of the withdrawal of the Spanish forces, of the weakness of spirit exhibited in some segments in Italy. Blair wielded the tools of information in the best way possible. And

he promised a response, finding the British unified in accepting it. And to think that, prior to the attacks, the majority were opposed to the war.

[28] Enrico Letta (born 20 August 1966) is an Italian politician.

[29] Sala Alessi is the main hall of Palazzo Marino, the seat of the Milan City Council.

[30] See note 10.

1. With Pope John Paul II (June 1997).
(© L'Osservatore Romano)

2. With the President of People's Republic of China, Jiang Zemin (March 1999).

3. With Vladimir Putin (June 2000).

4. In Moscow, with the Philarmonic Orchestra of La Scala, with Michail Gorbacev and Maestro Riccardo Muti (June 2000).

5. With Queen Elizabeth during HM official visit to Milan (October 2000).

6. With the Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini, in Piazza San Pietro at the ceremony for the Ambrosian Jubilee (4 November 2000). (© L'Osservatore Romano)

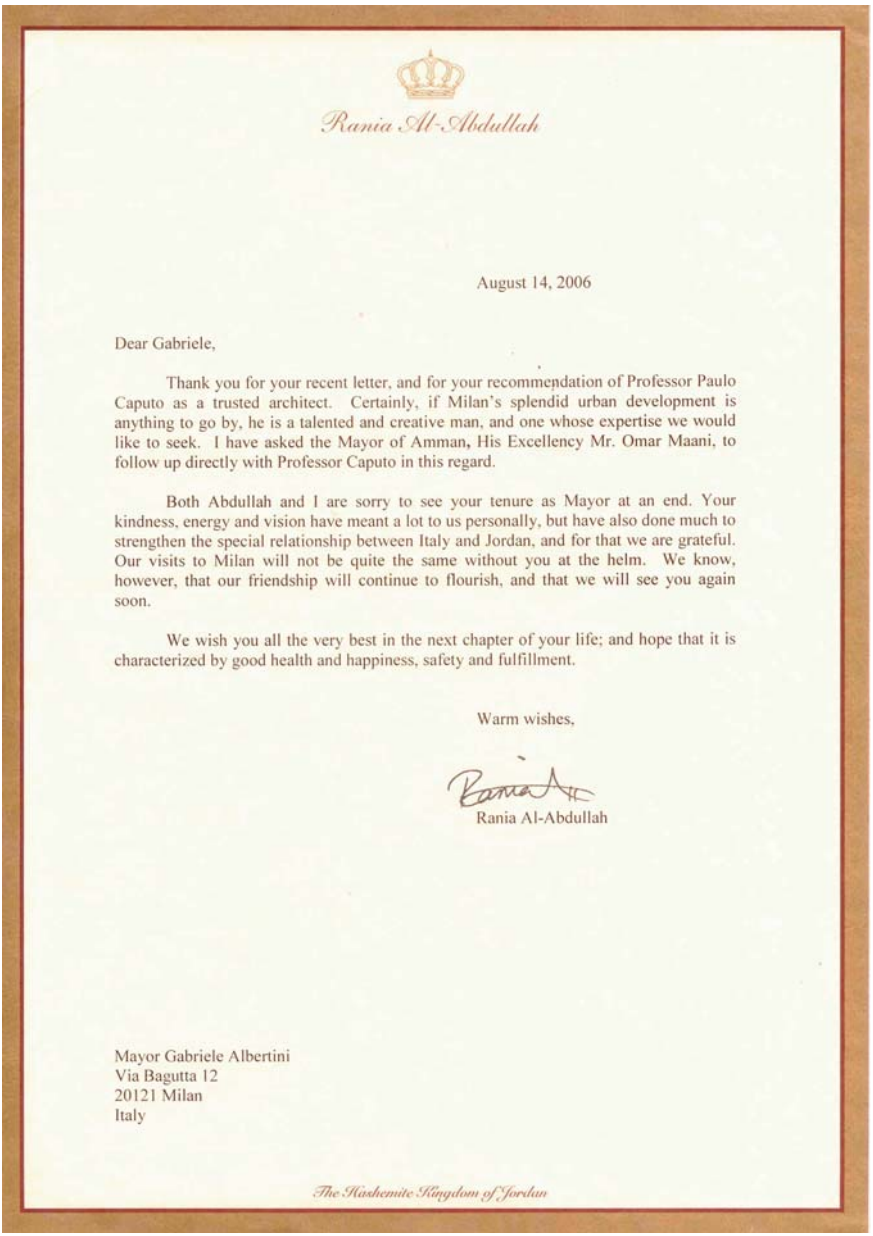
7. Ceremony for the celebration of the 140th anniversary of the Milanese Police Force (2001).

8. With Adriano Galliani, Carlo Ancellotti and Paolo Maldini on their return from Manchester as victors of the Campions League (May 2003).

9. With Ehud Olmert, then Mayor of Jerusalem, during his visit to Milan (November 2000).

10. At the World Business Forum, Gabriele Albertini bestows honorary citizenship on Rudolph Giuliani, Mayor of New York (October 2004).

11. With Queen Rania of Jordan (March 2006).



Rania Al-Abdullah

August 14, 2006

Dear Gabriele,

Thank you for your recent letter, and for your recommendation of Professor Paulo Caputo as a trusted architect. Certainly, if Milan's splendid urban development is anything to go by, he is a talented and creative man, and one whose expertise we would like to seek. I have asked the Mayor of Amman, His Excellency Mr. Omar Maani, to follow up directly with Professor Caputo in this regard.

Both Abdullah and I are sorry to see your tenure as Mayor at an end. Your kindness, energy and vision have meant a lot to us personally, but have also done much to strengthen the special relationship between Italy and Jordan, and for that we are grateful. Our visits to Milan will not be quite the same without you at the helm. We know, however, that our friendship will continue to flourish, and that we will see you again soon.

We wish you all the very best in the next chapter of your life; and hope that it is characterized by good health and happiness, safety and fulfillment.

Warm wishes,

Rania Al-Abdullah

Mayor Gabriele Albertini
Via Bagutta 12
20121 Milan
Italy

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

12. A Letter from Queen Rania of Jordan.

13. Gabriele Albertini with the certificate stating that, on 26 March 2006, together with Lieutenant Colonel Mauro Gabetta, he took part in the flight of an F16 of the Italian Air Force and broke the sound barrier.

14. Take-off from Cervia air-base on board an F16 of the Italian Air Force (21 March 2006).

Chapter 5

Wherein are narrated various and sundry encounters with the sentinels of global security.

In early 2001 during a mission to Washington, you delivered a letter from Silvio Berlusconi to President George W. Bush and met with Stephen Hadley, then national security advisor to the White House. What were your impressions of Washington, the new imperial capital?

It is no coincidence that Bush was born in July like Julius Caesar, even if it was on the 13th and not the 6th. Facetious comparisons aside, the United States and the *pax americana* now unquestionably represent what, 2000 years ago, the Roman Empire stood for. I went to Washington with the intention of meeting the heads of the new administration. A friend of mine, Michael Ledeen, who has not unfortunately enjoyed good press in Italy, had promised to get me into the White House and he did. I entered the West Wing carrying Berlusconi's first letter to Bush[31]. I was the first ambassador – or I should say, the first postman – of what became the new Italian government just a few months later. Berlusconi's missive made reference to Bush's compassionate conservatism. The thing that most surprised me about Hadley was his tiny office, almost a cubicle. However, it was in the White House and occupied by a man who was very close to the president. Yet again, in the trappings of power, Anglo-American sobriety contrasted

with Latin pomp. The other thing that surprised me was an ultra-thin monitor, a sheet of aluminium and plastic just a few millimetres thick, on the National Security Advisor's desk. Other than this object, there was nothing in the architecture, furnishings or dimensions that hinted at his level of power: the form did not coincide with the substance. It was thrilling to walk through the West Wing, and it conjured up a host of movies that showed the same light, the lampshades, the carpeting and the cream-colored walls. The atmosphere was warm, almost homey. There was a discreet presence of military personnel, especially marines.

A pilgrimage was also undertaken during your stay, because in addition to the Vietnam Memorial, about which we have already spoken, you also visited Arlington Cemetery, the Lincoln Memorial and Congress.

Yes, and during my stay I also met Jim Woolsey, former director of the CIA under Bush senior and then with Bill Clinton, to consult with him about the lingering controversy of the Argentine airports.

But let us focus on Clinton's chair, the chair in the Hall of Congress on which he sat while Congressman Henry Hyde conducted the interview about the Lewinsky affair. I would like to ask your thoughts on the Clinton story and on certain strange aspects of American democracy. Nixon lost the presidency because he wanted to bend the rules of the electoral process by spying on the Democratic candidate George McGovern, while Clinton managed to save himself by a hair for having lied about a sexual relation. This democracy seems at once so strong and yet so fragile, and certainly vulnerable to the strong influence of the media.

Precisely. The United States remind me of a diamond, the hardest material that exists, one that can scratch the most tempered steel but at the same time is also the most fragile, in the sense that while it cannot be scratched, a hammer blow will disintegrate it. Other materials adapt, they are ductile. They do so in different ways, and other nationals adapt to the implacable norms of democracy. In any case, I am of the opinion that as long as America steadfastly adheres to these rules, we have reason to believe in this system. And we can do so because the American system, unlike our own, forges statesmen, not petty politicians, people who work for the upcoming generations and not for the next election. Both the Clinton case and the analogous one, again of a sexual nature, of Gary Hart, teach us the importance of sincerity. Senator Hart lost his chance to become president and Clinton risked impeachment, being saved by his lucky star and by the fact that the US economy was going strong thanks to his policies. And this was the reason why, as an exception, he survived and was forgiven in spite of the fact that he lied about adultery in a deeply puritan country. An Italian asks himself what, after all, is a little lie about sexual matters? For Americans, sincerity is the seal of assurance on presidential power, of a strong and concentrated leader. This is the head of the executive branch, a person who is not elected by the Senate or by Congress, but directly by the people. It is a guarantee for humanity, given that we are talking about the leader of the world's greatest power. He can intervene in affairs, and pass or veto laws, and thus absolute integrity must be demanded of him. When we are talking about the most powerful man on earth, any infraction, even the smallest, cannot be allowed. If Gary Hart tells a lie as a candidate, it means he cannot be trusted when he will have to be perfect. It is like arriving

late for a job interview with a disorganised CV, bad breath and a dirty tie.

Our democracy entrusts politicians with far less responsibility, perhaps because in Italy trust is out of the question by principle. It is a typically Italian equivocation, where we take it for granted that a politician or administrator also has to be a man who attends to his own affairs, manages things, finds ways to get what he wants, and so we give him less power to prevent him from doing too much damage. And then when we have proof that he has not behaved impeccably, Italians turn a blind eye. It happens here in Italy that someone is found guilty of crimes against the public administration and after a few years we have him back on stage as if nothing happened, even in the same role as before. A democracy such as that of the United States, on the other hand, has a more rigorous, tougher, stronger character, and is less amenable to compromises.

This is probably also connected with a different religious ethic. At any rate, sitting on the chair where President Clinton sat while being questioned must have been a memorable experience.

I am reminded of the Carmina Triumphalia: when Caesar passed by after victory in battle, his legionnaires joked about his sexual relations with the king of Bithynia. His best soldiers said that "the queen of Bithynia" was passing. This type of comment was tolerated only in times of triumph so that the gods would not become envious of the emperor's glory. The jokes that were told about Clinton in those years were a sort of latter-day *Carmina Triumphalia*.

It seems that Hillary forgave him in any case. Perhaps partially

because she wanted to become senator and had her sights on the White House. Puritanism may be tempered by considerations of a practical nature.

My grandfather had a saying in dialect that we could translate more or less as: "If the Lord didn't forgive the sins of the [trouser] fly, he'd find himself alone with the Virgin Mary".

While you may be disappointed that you did not get to meet George W. Bush, we must not forget that you did have the privilege of having breakfast with his father, George senior.

It was one of my very first meetings with someone at the level of head of state. And to think that he was the man behind the first Gulf War! I met him in Carlo De Benedetti's private residence in May or June 1998[32]. The former president was visiting Milan and I had the privilege of sitting on his right at table. I thus had the chance to exchange ideas with him. In my halting but comprehensible english we talked about Ronald Reagan, a man whose speeches I recorded and from whom I learned much. I confess that I was and have remained a fanatic for his capacity to govern. I consider him one of the greatest presidents of the United States. With his determination and inexorable, unwavering adherence to the liberal ideal, he was able to defeat Soviet-style communism. Reagan was the only one who made us consciously aware of the values of liberty and of a market economy. He helped us understand that in order to create a society of free people, to make democracy prevail over dictatorships, one could and should threaten to resort to "star wars". If we won the cold war, we owe it as much to him as to Pope John Paul II. Fortunately, of course, on the other

side we had Mikhail Gorbachev, who, intelligent man that he is, understood the game was lost as a result of the implosion of the Soviet system. Sure, Reagan's attitude was a bit cowboy. When asked why his staff didn't wake him up when a Libyan plane was shot down over the Gulf of Sidra, he responded, "If one of *our* planes had been shot down, yes, they'd wake me up right away. If it's the other fellows, why wake me up?" In substance, Reagan had the strength to stand up to the evil empire at a time when it appeared to be spreading all over the world, after Vietnam, with the invasion of Afghanistan and a 1,000 other provocations. This vigorous resistance by the United States was essential for defeating the Soviet Union. Something that was supposed to be a great ideology that would endure through the millennia, like the Catholic Church, collapsed in a matter of weeks, from the Romanian revolution to the breaching of the Berlin Wall. And to think that some in the Catholic Church itself had believed in the ability of communism to mould people's minds. Instead it was all a grand illusion. In the 1970s there was this desire to believe that our enemy was like us; we granted him dignity, recognised him as eternal, and this helped us remain consistent in our actions. But Reagan and the gentlemen of the US intelligence community, of which Bush senior was an esteemed representative, helped us unmask this ruse.

On this subject, many wonder whether the world really is a better place, in terms of both global security and economic stability, now that the Cold War has ended. When the Iron Curtain was still in existence it was unlucky to be born on the other side, but, especially in the more conservative sectors of both sides, some maintain that this counterposition served to stabilise the system, to sub-

due the darker and more nefarious forces of politics, society and the economy.

Just as the undesired side-effect of industrialisation is pollution, the side-effect of the end of the Cold War, and the end of the nightmare of total thermonuclear war, is the loose "balls of mercury". The concentrated powers are so many and so varied they cannot be traced: terrorists, oligarchs, international financial criminals, former secret service agents. All can transform themselves into security threats, with attacks of great and bloody impact, as we saw with the Twin Towers. But these are nevertheless anomalies that we might define as market anomalies, and we no longer face the risk of a thermonuclear war that would put us back in the Stone Age.

Let's go back for a moment to your impressions of the meeting with Bush senior.

When I shook the hand of this elegant man, the first thing that struck me was his class. He gave the impression of being a gentleman as well as an oil magnate. He had something special that could not go unnoticed, and it had nothing to do with the fact that he had been president of the United States. With his broad forehead, sharp and cordial gaze, he had a special distinction. Reginald Bartholomew, who was not yet ambassador to Italy at the time of the First Gulf War but part of the presidential staff, recounted an episode to me. Saddam Hussein had invaded Kuwait and a decision had to be made as to how to respond. We have to imagine a meeting at the White House with all the advisors, ministers and generals, a meeting in the style of *Dr. Strangelove*. Everyone states his or her opinion: this has

happened, we are a great power, we have obligations to the planet, after the end of the Cold War we have effectively become the world's police force, an international law has been violated, etc etc. However there are also those, like the secretary of state, who make observations regarding the incendiary effects of a conflict between American foreign policy and the Islamic world: the presence of US soldiers in the Gulf would spark a reaction from extremists. In short, the question is raised as to whether it is opportune to intervene or not. And then there are some advisors who gauge the repercussions of intervention on the economy and development in terms of the price of oil. Lastly, the military advisors have their say and, paradoxically, they are the most strongly opposed, since it would be up to them to do the "dirty work" and suffer the highest costs in terms of human lives. And so they emphasise the level of weaponry of Saddam's army and the logistical difficulties in occupying a territory the size of Iraq, as big as France with 30 million inhabitants. After everyone has had his or her say, the onlookers expect a decision from the leader and look at him: Bush has listened to everyone, taken notes and asked for further explanations. There is a pause when no one speaks, then the president thanks everyone, commenting on their contributions and finally declares that he wants to do just the opposite, explaining the ethical reasons for the intervention and stating that there is a destiny for nations just as there is for men. There are moments when a nation cannot shrink back from a higher calling. Especially in this case, when the fundamental right of a small country has been violated. This anecdote gave me the impression of Bush senior as a meditative, alert, scrupulous and mannerly person who does not need to raise his voice. He reminded me of a timid man like Harry Tru-

man, who, in spite of a host of dilemmas, had the strength of spirit to drop two atomic bombs and thus end a world war. And so I remember him as an "ethical" leader. At the end of our conversation, he informed me of the physical condition of Reagan, of his debilitation and the fact that he no longer recognised anyone, except his wife Nancy. It was, in fact, close to the time of his death. Bush senior considered himself a sort of dauphin to Reagan, letting transpire a deep sadness and sense of friendship.

A further thought: the Reagan-Bush coupling is very interesting because, in spite of the fact that they were part of the same system and political party, they had quite different personalities. One was an actor from Hollywood, a man always ready with a quip, a propagandist; the other was a gentleman and oil magnate who had had an important career in the CIA, with an analytical and thoughtful personality. However, one gets the impression that it was precisely Reagan's charisma and talent with the media that Bush lacked in the 1992 election against Clinton.

I fully agree with your analysis. In the days of Reagan, a magazine was published that read "Why is this man so popular?" on the cover. The United States had found in him a way to exorcise the wounds of Vietnam and, thanks to this great communicator, they succeeded. Reagan, instead of just reciting other people's lines, was the actor of his own scripts. Or better, he believed intensely in his simple, essential, defining, non-chaotic values and gave the impression not of a doubtful intellectual, but of responding like a common man, an observer of reality who was fully aware of day-to-day life. The other was more intellectual, more cultivated, better educated, more man-

agerial and perhaps somewhat less authentic. When I was getting ready to take my first steps as mayor, British minister Claire Short advised me to "have a hard head and a big heart". If you swap the adjectives around – a hard heart and a big head – you err politically. A big heart is the ability to comprehend, to open up, to know, to listen, to be generous even with one's opponents, whereas the hard head corresponds to willpower and determination. Bush senior owed his defeat in the election against Clinton to a diminishing authenticity and to some doubts that he had let grow. In the early phase he had had the lucidity, rationality and determination to make war, but not a big enough heart for the aftermath, to be understood during the subsequent phase. Perhaps it was because he was president more by trade than conviction, because he was a professional rather than because it was his passion. He lost because he lacked the balance of a man with convictions, the appearance of authenticity. It may be that Reagan was also a bit of a tradesman – an actor in his case – but at least he believed in the part he was playing.

Let's move on to someone else, a friend who is not loved by everyone in Italy: Michael Ledeen, former intelligence consultant in Italy, known for having translated the conversation between President Ronald Reagan and Bettino Craxi[33] during the Sigonella crisis after the Achille Lauro hijacking[34].

Again, I would like to make a reference to cinema: anyone who has seen the film *La piazza delle Cinque Lune* cannot help but note the resemblance, both physically and in terms of personality, between Michael and the character Murray Abraham. Michael is a bottomless pit of historical knowledge, and it is

not just scholarly knowledge, but also based on direct experience, particularly so in Italian history because of his involvement in the Moro case, Sigonella and other events. We were introduced to him one day and he revealed himself very useful in unravelling the Argentinian airport mess. He is a fascinating and well-educated man; he has written, among other things, a very good book on Machiavelli. With his allure as a member of the intelligence community and his contacts with the Republicans in Washington, he charmed us, alternating between sweeping designs and succulent bits of gossip. In 2000 and 2001 he established relations with Italy, some in the name of the new Bush administration, with the future majority here. In the final analysis he allowed the establishment of good contacts, such as those with Hadley and Woolsey. When I turned to Indro Montanelli, whom knew Michael because he had worked for *Il Giornale*, for some advice on the man, the great wise man of Italian journalism smiled good-naturedly and spoke of him as a pleasant person with whom it was always interesting to talk, precisely because he had stimulating intellectual and human gifts. But he finished by saying that he was undependable, not in the sense of a negative character trait or a man who posed some sort of danger, but because he was a man with so many different contacts that "at times he risked forgetting who he was working for at any given moment". That's what Montanelli said. For example, the first trip I took to Washington that Michael had organised was a curious affair. The interviews with a series of local newspapers were never published and I never received copies of the photographs and videos taken at Arlington. All this gave me the feeling that he was preparing a big fat file on me. Who knows?

You may have realised it at the time, but perhaps you were under examination…

Yes, I think it was precisely something along those lines. I was especially struck by a strange interviewer and interpreter in his office. My feeling was that they wanted to understand with whom they were dealing, a sort of psychological analysis. And the same thing goes for those photographs I never received. And they never even let me know if I passed the test. Even if we have been in touch less in recent years, I still have a positive memory of Michael.

While we're on the subject of the United States, could we add a few brief thoughts on Rudolph Giuliani's successor, the magnate Michael Bloomberg?

To me, Bloomberg does not have Giuliani's charm, even though I found him quite likeable for his qualities as a businessmen and his personality. After our talk, he gave me a book on his life with a nice dedication. He gave me the impression of being a colder man than Giuliani, apparently more rational. Whereas, as I said before, I found in Giuliani a man of values and strong ethics, Bloomberg evoked more the aspects of a manager, an entrepreneur, a very practical man. This is clearly a consequence of their different backgrounds: the first is the investigating magistrate that took on organised crime, the second is an extremely wealthy communications businessman – a sort of New York Berlusconi. I happened to meet him again in Athens during a gathering of mayors of large cities. However, I cannot say that I see in him the teacher I found in Giuliani. I should add that the qualities of Giuliani's leadership as mayor

were recently confirmed by a series of New York real estate entrepreneurs, who told me that in his time there was a greater push toward development, while, paradoxically, having a great entrepreneur at the helm of the metropolis has not brought the same impulse with it.

The articles were referring to the pending decision to redevelop large areas of the city, and in particular the harbour area.

Once again, determination, hard-headedness and big-heartedness are the guarantee of success. The other mayor is more of a manager, more pragmatic, a broker of interests without such a strong political vision. So I am not surprised that there is some grumbling now. A man with a strong consensus and credibility can afford to do things quickly and directly, while others, especially if they are business-people, have to negotiate every step and are perhaps more subject to conditioning because they have interests that hold them back. But I can understand how difficult it is to compete with a giant, especially after the tragedy of the Twin Towers, where Giuliani demonstrated the full depth of his charisma.

Let's go back to the 2000-2001 season, the final period of the Ulivo government. It was the eve of the political and administrative elections of 2001 that put you into your second term as mayor and that brought national victory to the Casa delle Libertà. It was a victory for the centre-right in Milan that was almost plebiscitary, with Albertini in a certain sense the spokesman of Italian international policy for the following five years. In 2000 and 2001, you met people of the calibre of Jiang Zemin, Putin, Elizabeth II and had a close brush with George W. Bush. Do you believe these gov-

ernments were sending a signal of discontinuity with the out-going Ulivo government in Rome?

One can unquestionably read the sequence of events in that way. Ambassador Spassky came to Milan way in advance to announce that President Putin planned to visit our city and meet with the business community under a centre-right government, and as the guest of an entrepreneurial mayor. As Ford might have said, he came to talk with capital and illustrate his theory of business, in the noble sense of the term. By explaining that he would guarantee free initiative and internationalisation, Putin staked his bets on our administration as a forerunner and paradigm of the imminent Berlusconi government. After that, Prime Minister Berlusconi's relationship with Putin was characterised by significant interpersonal dialogue and highly cordial and collaborative exchanges. In their first meeting, as recounted to us by Ambassador Aragona in Moscow and by Valentino Valentini, Putin cited the experience of the Fondazione Italia-Russia. And at the White House too, in spite of modest opposition by ambassador Salleo, probably more aligned with the centre-left, we received disproportionately grandiose treatment for a simple mayor.

So, in this case as in others, it was an act of diplomacy that was justifiable from a political standpoint, but certainly not standard practice.

In any case, we succeeded, because the letter from Berlusconi made it to Bush, who in turn responded. That was the signal we were looking for. If we had adhered to protocol, I would only have met with the mayor of Washington or New

York. Perhaps there was some luck involved, or maybe someone wanted to invest in us. A few days ago I saw *The Last Emperor* again, in which a fabulous Peter O'Toole plays the British tutor of the young Son of Heaven. The international community has always invested in future leadership, in part intentionally and in part circumstantially. But I believe that luck and pluck are often intertwined in the history of people and peoples. The sun of Austerlitz helped Napoleon's artillery men to take aim, exactly 200 years ago, while at Waterloo, Emmanuel Grouchy's forces were mired in mud and prevented from intercepting the Prussians, in spite of the fact that the battle had been brilliantly planned by the emperor.

Sun and mud. How does this relate to the heads of state who came to visit Milan?

Putin chose to come. Jiang Zemin was in Italy and asked to make a visit to Milan. The same is true of Queen Elizabeth II. Perhaps all of this came about partially because of the rules of international economics. My only regret is not managing to meet Bush junior, even if I did have the chance to chat with his father.

[31] Michael Arthur Ledeen (born 1 August 1941) is an American specialist on foreign policy.
[32] Carlo De Benedetti (born 14 November 1934) is an Italian industrialist, engineer and publisher.
[33] Benedetto (Bettino) Craxi (24 February 1934 – 19 January 2000) was an Italian statesman, head of the Italian Socialist Party from 1976 to 1993 and prime minister from 1983 to 1987.
[34] Craxi is also remembered for the Sigonella affair of October 1985, when he refused the request by Ronald Reagan to extradite the Palestinian hijackers of the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro. The PLO group was responsible for the murder of an American citizen, Leon Klinghoffer.

Chapter 6

Wherein it is recounted how sometimes, when wandering the desert, one stumbles upon a pillar of wisdom.

In your nine years as mayor of Milan you met Queen Rania of Jordan four times and her husband King Abdullah twice. It must have been quite an experience, given that they are the heirs of King Hussein of the Hashemite monarchy, which descends from the caliphs of Mecca and therefore from Muhammad himself. The young royal couple have succeeded in reconciling the values of Islam with a modern view of society, and the Queen is helping to recast the role of women in the Arab world.

Queen Rania came to Milan in 2002 for fashion week and a conference organised in collaboration with the Italian Centre for Middle Eastern Peace, the participants of which included Letizia Moratti, then minister of education. The conference dealt with the role of women in Western and Islamic societies, and Her Majesty had assumed the role of ambassador for this movement of modernisation, civilisation and expansion of horizons. She is a fascinating woman in every way, and I say that with all due respect. When I received her at Palazzo Marino, there was a great horde of photographers and camera crews calling out her name as if she were an actress expected to flash her best smile, at which point I said, "Please, Her Majesty is a queen, not a pop star". I was rewarded with a royal smile for my attempt to safeguard the dignity of her position. Media

folklore aside, I saw in her a keen intelligence and an extraordinary love for her country. She had truly generous words to say about Milan, and reiterated them the following day in an interview with Antonio Ferrari of *Corriere della Sera*, who was perhaps the catalyst for our city's friendship with Jordan. The Hashemite monarchy has forged a position over the years as being loyal to the Islamic cause in the broadest sense, while also being rigorously protective of its own security and absolutely unsympathetic towards fundamentalist terrorism. This has enabled it to preserve its dignity and ensure its appurtenance to the cultural and religious ideals of a civilisation with modern values that almost the entire world shares. During the Queen's stay in Milan, she attended the fashion shows and met with economic and political leaders. I had the opportunity to show her how an international city, populated by citizens from all over the world, can function as a forum for dialogue at many levels – economic, cultural and religious. I told her about my trips to Palestine, we talked about Israel, and I expressed our city's desire to represent a small but significant piece of the western world on the global stage. As in the past with other leaders such as Putin, I could see that the Queen understood that she was dealing with someone she could trust, at which point she put aside protocol, lowered the customary protective barriers, and our discussion became genuinely confidential. Afterwards there was a reception at Palazzo Reale with the most important Milanese fashion designers. That was when I made her promise that she would return to Milan to be awarded honorary citizenship, which she did in September of 2005.

You also met with her in July 2003 at the World Economic Forum in Amman, where you were received by King Abdullah.

Yes, that was quite an interesting experience. As you know, and obviously I say this with a certain degree of facetiousness, I am a 'collector' of civic honours and knight's crosses from all over. I am particularly proud, however, of having received the Grand Cordon of the Order of Istiqlal, meaning 'freedom'. If I'm not mistaken, the first foreigner to receive this honour was T.E. Lawrence. The King tied the Grand Cordon around me, while my staff composed ribald rhymes with the Italian '*cordone*'. Horseplay aside, there was nearly a diplomatic incident involving the Italian ambassador to Amman, Stefano Jedrkiewicz, who had informed us that for reasons of protocol, and not out of any ill will or desire to be polemical, he did not feel he could attend the award ceremony, as it was supposed to be reserved for heads of state, or at the very least for those who had accomplished something significant enough to merit being considered a peer of His Majesty. That still amuses me.

A bit like the Collare dell'Annunziata, which gave its wearer the right to vaunt the title of 'cousin of the King'. Evidently the ambassador felt you didn't deserve it[35].

He felt it was inappropriate that I receive such an honour, perhaps because it had not yet been bestowed upon our president. Anyway, it was given to me, and it brings to mind an exquisite gesture of royal grace on the part of Queen Rania. I was brought into the hall of the hotel where the ceremony was to take place, escorted by the royal couple, the King by my side and the Queen on his left. Before us was a vast window through which the afternoon sun streamed – directly into my eyes. With barely a glance, the Queen summoned a member of her entourage and, with a minimal gesture that was instantly

understood, indicated that the curtain should be moved so as to protect me from the sun's glare. The graciousness they showed me while I was their guest was rare indeed. I had cars that drove me all over the country, complete with military escort.

What impression did you get of the King as a person?

A fine young man who became a fine young king, one who is making an effort in the Middle East that few others are making. Let's not forget that he is a former officer of the British army's Second Armoured Battalion. With his energy and education he has managed to forge a strong character distinguished by intellectual honesty and clarity of mind. He stands firmly as a bastion against terrorism. We had a chance to talk about his pastimes, and planned a visit to Milan so he could try an Agusta helicopter in Varese and a Ferrari at the Monza circuit.

The following day you crossed the Jordan River at the Allenby Bridge and went to Jerusalem, lodging at the American Colony, but they didn't give you T.E. Lawrence's room.

I still envy Aldo Scarselli, the head of my Cabinet at the time, who was able to enjoy that privilege. The great *Aurans Iblis*, or "Lawrence the Devil", as the Arabs used to call him, has always been one of my heroes. A truly unique man who led an amazing life; a figure of such genius, determination, mystical conviction and capacity to get things done that he influenced the history of the world. With minimal means and only his ideas, he succeeded in moving an entire people, like a pebble bringing down a mountain. When he felt himself be-

trayed by the western powers at Versailles, he retired to private life, in part out of respect for Abdullah's great-grandfather, King Faisal.

In March 2006 you had one last chance as mayor to meet with Abdullah and Rania in Amman, in March of 2006.

We had established a close friendship by that point, and I was received in the royal residence. They were very attentive during the meeting, and reiterated their trust and friendship with Milan. They understood how much our city had invested in promoting dialogue and working towards peace. They were also interested in understanding the kinds of synergies that might grow out of the process of urban development in Amman. The Queen asked if we would be willing to share our management and development models in the field of urban planning, acknowledging the fact that Milan is at the cutting edge of architecture and also engineering services. I communicated this request to the new mayor, Letizia Moratti, who welcomed it. The choice of Jordan as the beneficiary of our aid and knowledge was a strategic one, insofar as Jordan is a moderate and well-governed nation. I was impressed by the excellent legislation that His Majesty passed with regard to tax exemption for certain production areas and the reduction of import duties for goods coming in from neighboring countries – including Palestine – which are then re-exported to the United States.

We should give credit to Antonio Ferrari, a reporter from Corriere della Sera*, for having consolidated this friendship with the Jordanian royal family.*

That's true, he was essential. I owe the privilege of having been brought into that friendship to him. He's a great journalist, for whom none other than Indro Montanelli had words of high praise. It was with genuine conviction that I bestowed on him a well-deserved *Ambrogino d'Oro*.

So the mayor who described himself as an "apartment building manager" nonetheless enjoyed privileged relationships with international statesmen. Yet at the beginning of your first term, your image was closer that of Forrest Gump, for example when you ended up by chance in that discussion with Bill Clinton and Helmut Kohl.

With the modesty that I was taught and which I strive to practice, as Raymond Barre said, I am reminded of Jesus's response when John the Baptist asked, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" Jesus exhorted John to look around him at all the miracles of the world. Without beating around the bush, and hoping that God has a sense of humour, considering that as an alumnus of the Jesuits I should take inspiration in Him, what I mean to say is that, in the end, we are remembered for what we accomplish. Regardless of what the scribes may have smeared onto their news pages, it is my deeds that will be judged by posterity. And this holds true for the international relations I cultivated in those nine years. After having described myself at the beginning of my mayoralty as an 'apartment building manager', I can now point out with both humility and pride the results I obtained during my two terms. Obviously, as a citizen of Milan, I hope that the same if not greater results will be achieved by my successors.

Your years at the helm of the city corresponded with major international upheavals, not least the epochal change in the West's relationship with Islam. As a member of the European Parliament, you voted in favour of Turkey's entry into the EU. After 9/11, Milan drew attention, sadly, as a logistical base for Islamic radicalism, which was effectively dismantled by Stefano Dambruoso[36]. Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the way things are going?

My view coincides with that of one of my teachers, Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini. He spoke to me about the decades, not years, that will be required to quell extremism and join the path to peace and serenity in the Middle East and the rest of the world. I strongly believe that this story will have a positive outcome, but the road that leads to this brighter future is long, and history must be allowed to run its course – think of how long it took for the totalitarian ideologies of the 19th century to fade. Today in Europe, we're all part of a single homeland, but our fathers and grandfathers and great-grandfathers fought on opposing sides. There was perhaps no more ferocious battle during the World War II, both in terms of propaganda and ordnance, than the one between Italy and Great Britain. And now look at us. The conflicts of the 19th century amounted to a European civil war, now we are united. It is my hope that the same thing will eventually happen between the West and Islam, though hopefully it won't take as long. This process can begin in our cities, which host every ethnic group and every religion. Milan is an open city, a new city, curious to understand and participate in the world; a city populated by the kinds of people who, beyond what they produce economically, act from a position of conscience and awareness. Integration can and will happen in Milan. But in order to remain true to the ultimate

goal, subversion and violence must be suppressed and defeated by cutting off the economic and organisational resources of those who promote terrorism. In short, *concede parum, nega saepe, distingue simper* – concede rarely, contest often and distinguish always.

During your first trip to Israel and Palestine in July 2000, you were unable to meet with Yasser Arafat because he was at Camp David with Ehud Barak, negotiating a treaty that eventually failed. In compensation, you met Abu Mazen at the Mukata'a, a man who could be called moderate..

Arafat's successor received me as a representative of the city of Milan. He told me first of all that, despite the conflict that was underway and Hamas's recent victory in the Palestinian elections, it was essential that western aid continued to come in at local level. He also emphasised that, while there was a subversive element in the governance of the Palestinian territories, the ANP could not be left on its own. The alternative, he explained, would be civil war and the expansion of terrorism. Once again, the words of Cardinal Martini came to mind: if you want to resolve a conflict, you need the help of a balanced man, one with both wisdom and vision. At the meeting's end, President Abu Mazen presented me with a bottle of oil made from Palestinian olives using the Italian method. I understood then the challenge faced by a suffering nation that nevertheless wished to compete in the global market, asking for assistance and training from the West. He told me that he would try to ensure the smooth assumption of responsibility for governing the country by Hamas, but should they fail to rise above that childhood disease otherwise known as extremism, their inabil-

ity to govern would be exposed, new elections would be held and Hamas would lose. All on the absolute condition that peace would be pursued and that the state of Israel would be recognised. There was then a departure from protocol, of which I was witness, when Abu Mazen expressed his hope that his friend Olmert win the Israeli election.

Nemer Hammad was also present at that meeting, a man well known in Italy, now political advisor to President Mazen...

A intriguing person whose face reveals his sharpness of mind; someone who can alternate between loyalty and a certain opportunism. But yes, he is a great friend of Italy.

You met with Shimon Peres on two separate occasions, in 2000 and 2006. The first time was just a few days after he had lost the presidential election. What were your impressions of that first trip to the Holy Land – in the Jubilee Year, no less?

The encounter with Peres came at an odd moment, since I was there to visit both Israel and Palestine and harboured an ardent hope for future peace. I told him that Milan, and more generally the Italian economy as represented by our city, could make an important contribution to development in the region. He was instead convinced, wrongly, that the distribution of wealth would exorcise the hostility, and that everything could be resolved by satisfying basic material needs. Instead, hostility and need were the premises behind the violence of the second intifada and the suicidal fundamentalism of Hamas's actions in the months that followed. It seemed that, along with the excessive utopianism of Peres's noble view, a new relationship be-

tween the two communities was emerging. The same ideas had come out of the meeting with the governor of Ramallah, who happened to be a relative of Arafat. There we inaugurated Milan Square, right in front of the city hall, which a few months later would unfortunately become the tragic scene of the lynching of two Israeli soldiers, killed and then thrown from the window of the police station.

That was in October 2001.

Exactly. Just a year earlier we had been so hopeful, not because of any naïve enthusiasm, but because of what they were telling us. I'm sorry that the square we designed and rebuilt, in partnership with the Politecnico di Milano, became not a symbol of reconciliation as we had intended, but a theatre of tragedy[37]. I had thought that a regeneration was taking place. Perhaps I had allowed myself to be distracted by the Jubilee Year, which for me lent a mystical air of holiness to the area. I agree entirely with what Cardinal Martini told me two years later in Jerusalem: the Holy Land is a strange place, where all of the critical risks for a tragic future are present, and all of the opportunities for a positive one. It should be a place where different civilisations, different histories can coexist; a place where the world's principal monotheistic religions can all have their centre, and for that reason get along with one another. At the same time, it is the paradigm of humanity and eternity. What distracted me was the desire for peace that appeared to come from both sides. When I met with representatives of the PNA, everyone expressed their interest and enthusiasm for cooperation projects with Milan Fiera and SMAU. The Israelis gave us the same impression, mindful of their greater production

capacity and formidable stature with regard to technology and R&D. I thought that a dialogue between the two cultures and a stable peace might be achieved through economic well-being, but instead it was base prejudice that prevailed. Deprivation and humiliation were the driving forces behind what happened subsequently, leading people to foolishly sacrifice their own lives. I find it tragic that a man who chooses to die with a bomb around his chest believes that this is his highest moment, when in fact it is merely the confirmation of defeat. During all those meetings, the only person who expressed any perplexity was the mayor of Tel Aviv, my friend and colleague Ron Huldai, who predicted a less rosy future with great clarity.

So it was Huldai who expressed himself lucidly, while Nobel Peace Prize winner Shimon Peres was lost in an excess of optimism.

Yes, but his optimism was connected to what was happening around him. During that meeting I had the feeling that he was preparing himself for the presidency of the state of Israel. He had a great vision, particularly with regard to the thorny issue of the status of Jerusalem. He saw cities as concentrations of civilisation in the broadest sense, and believed that it is in cities where individuals, cultures, nations and religions can get to know and appreciate each other without clashing. Given that he was talking with a mayor, he emphasised the urban question, but in truth his vision was larger, strategic and historical, determined to re-evaluate what went on in his own country. His optimism was that of a man who wanted to be called to a higher cause. He spoke of peace in the Middle East as something within immediate reach, and perhaps he dreamt of overseeing it as president. Apart from this, Peres is a man with

all the experience, knowledge and credibility that comes from decades in politics at the highest levels. For this reason, I interpreted his optimism as something he sincerely believed possible. He was like a man who watches from the height of a tower and believes in the march of civilisation, which advances regardless of the men doing the marching. It was not blind optimism, but hope and vision. Huldai on the other hand – and I would say the same thing about myself – was not much more than an administrator, someone more grounded, with a more direct perception of reality. I was nonetheless fascinated by the depth and substance of Peres, both times I met him. Emanuele Fiano, then city councillor and president of the Jewish community in Milan, now a member of Parliament, was with us at the time. He was truly moved and "proud to be with Peres and to meet the great architect of peace".

Then Peres lost the presidential election by a handful of votes to the conservative Moshe Katsav, whom you met on several occasions.

The fact that Peres didn't reach the presidency then but two years later doesn't necessarily mean that his prophecy was less valid. Perhaps it will still come true. And perhaps, as I said earlier, we should expect a wider and longer road to peace. If a man shares and interprets the will of the people, like all great statesmen he will realise the dreams of the nation he represents.

You met Peres again in March of 2006 in a political context that had changed quite a lot since your first encounter five years earlier – domestically with the birth of the new Kadima party, and internationally with the global terrorism offensive. This gave him a more realistic perspective.

This time I realised the extraordinary extent of his lucidity; he was no longer grooming himself for the presidency. Moreover, his relationship with Ariel Sharon, and perhaps the fact that our delegation was not exactly leftist, made him more realistic. I was no longer standing before a statesman, but a wise governor. This detachment – and I hope if he reads this he won't take it the wrong way – made him much more authentic. I could see his pragmatism when he spoke of investing in moderate Arabs, particularly Abu Mazen. Peres met with him and told him that the western world mustn't withhold its support for moderate Palestinians, specifically the men of Al Fatah. A message that mirrored Abu Mazen's expression of support for Kadima. Unwittingly, or perhaps not, we were used to carry this exchange of messages. To sum up, the Peres I met in 2006 was extraordinarily realistic, clear-headed and open-minded.

We should point out that you were one of the first Italian politicians, certainly the first from the centre-right, to visit the Yad Vashem holocaust memorial and the Hill of Remembrance in an official capacity.

That was surely one of the most moving experiences, along with my visit to Auschwitz, that I remember from my travels abroad as mayor of Milan. Yad Vashem makes a profound impression – the hall with the starry sky that represents the souls of the children who died during the Holocaust is extremely powerful, like the site at Auschwitz where the clothing and crutches of crippled children are assembled. Six million people were exterminated for the declared purpose of eliminating their race, not because they were hostile or dangerous or even because they represented a conflict of interests. I still don't under-

stand the insanity that could have brought the civilisation of Goethe, Hegel, Beethoven, indeed of Europe in general, to conceive such an abomination. We are accustomed, wrongly, to expect violent behaviour from barbarians, while we remain dumbstruck when that same behaviour is manifested by a culture like Germany's. The synthesis that it represents, between modernity and sensitivity, was somehow transformed into a heartless machine of death, coldly scientific in its operation, truly evil in its purpose. Yad Vashem is deeply moving, and engages one's moral conscience in a powerful way.

As in other circumstances, from the Kremlin to the White House, you were a pioneer here as well, lighting the flame of Yad Vashem and thus opening the door for a visit three years later by Gianfranco Fini and Pier Ferdinando Casini[38]. At this point, the Israelis had become more inclined to accept the Italian centre-right.

That's true. There was a lot of attention focused on us by the local institutions, and by Peres and the government as well. Perhaps it was necessary, more so than in the past, to build a bridge with a democratic Italy that was overcoming the errors of its fascist past. This process was taking place among the Italian Jewish communities as well, though – understandably – with greater difficulty, since they had lived through the absolute evil of the racial laws and then the deportations.

Let's go back to your colleague, Ron Huldai.

I met Ron three times, once in Milan and twice in Tel Aviv. Perhaps you'll recall that in 1998 I led the City Council to ratify a bill that had been on hold for more than 15 years that would have made Milan and Tel Aviv sister cities. The mayor

at the time, Paolo Pillitteri, had signed it, but then it got lost in the shuffle. When I met Huldai in his office, we were on the very spot where Yitzhak Rabin had been killed, adjacent to the town hall in the big square where the people of Tel Aviv gather. Huldai is an interesting person, sympathetic to the left, a former pilot of the Israeli air force, with an athletic build and a pragmatic mind. He presents himself as what he is – it's easy to imagine him in a flight suit stepping down from a Phantom during the Yom Kippur War, the same one in which Ariel Sharon outsmarted the Egyptians and captured a bridgehead on the Suez Canal. He is a pragmatic, dynamic man with a sensibility similar to my own, and with whom I therefore felt immediately at ease. Despite being a military man, his approach to civil governing is managerial. As I said, during our first meeting in 2000, the issue under discussion was how to subdivide Jerusalem, sacred city of the world's three great monotheistic faiths. Huldai, having listened to our account of the attestations of faith and hope that we had seen, looked at us with a mixture of prudence and scepticism and explained that the situation wouldn't result in the desired outcome for a number of reasons, not least of which was the extremism of both Palestinians and Israelis alike. Let us not forget that it was in the square next to his office where General Rabin, the great champion of peace, was assassinated by an Israeli extremist. I left a bit disappointed by this skepticism, but it proved over time to have been quite realistic.

In 2002 you met another mayor who would later rise to the Cabinet and then prime minister, Ehud Olmert, the heir of Sharon. Perhaps now would be a good time to tell us about your adventure crossing the Israeli border at Allenby.

It was June 2002, and I had just come from the World Economic Forum on the Dead Sea in Jordan, and was about to cross the border at Allenby to reach Jerusalem. Two interesting things happened, one of which was particularly striking, and that was a phone call from, I believe, the Israeli Embassy in Rome as we approached the border crossing at Allenby. We were in the middle of the desert, nothing around us except perhaps a couple of camels; the Jordanian escort had long left us to proceed on our own through this no-man's land. And then, with unnerving precision, the phone rang and we were welcomed to Israel and advised that we would reach the border in 200 meters. Once I had got over the unsettling feeling of being surveilled, I appreciated this efficiency very much, if only for the fact that it saved us long hours of waiting. We received an extremely warm welcome at the border, despite the inevitable heavy security measures. We were allowed to enjoy air conditioning and other comforts while our papers were being processed for the crossing. At that point, the second episode occurred: in the wide open area surrounding the border post, I saw a motorcade of three black SUVs with tinted windows approaching – clearly someone important. The motorcade stopped at a distance, but close enough for me too see several armed soldiers get out of the cars, and then a figure I recognised as Ehud Olmert, Sharon's vice-premier at the time. I had known him as the mayor of Jerusalem, and we had had a great meeting in Milan, one of those that I won't forget because of the intellectual affinity we discovered, particularly on the subject of Israel's security. Olmert had said to me, "There are as many different civilisations in Jerusalem as you can imagine, yet there are no terrorist incidents because we've managed to control extremism there, to isolate it. With force, yes, and with

a wall, but that's how we prevent violence". Despite his rigorously conservative politics, he did not exclude the possibility of opening diplomatic channels with moderate Arabs, a sign of his great intelligence. For this reason he had been invited to speak at the World Economic Forum. His subsequent political evolution which, along with Peres, saw him as leader of the new centrist party Kadima, is probably no accident. Anyway, getting back to the border post, I was glad to see him and decided to go and say hello. I walked towards him rather quickly, almost running, and as I was doing so it dawned on me that I was not being perceived as a colleague, indeed a friend of Olmert I was a was a potential threat, to the extent that they suddenly drew their weapons! For a second, I feared the worst.

A rather reckless move I'd say!

Reckless is exactly the word. And it could have been truly dangerous. Fortunately, Olmert recognised me, ordered his men to stand down and came over to greet me. We embraced, exchanged pleasantries, and that was that.

On your most recent trip to Israel, you were hosted by the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi, Yona Metzger.

He was a gracious host, and our conversation was interesting. Though he is one of Israel's highest religious authorities, he is attentive to the most modern developments. We concentrated largely on China and the opportunities and challenges it represents. I had actually met him earlier in Milan after he had been in Rome for his first official meeting with the new Pope Benedict XVI. The occasion was the inauguration of the

Merkos School, to which the city had bequeathed a building in via Forze Armate. Rav Metzger invoked a benediction for the city and its mayor, which I took as an honour. The school is a perfect example of the synthesis of identity and integration, an experience that should be extended to other communities.

After your meeting in Jerusalem with the Chief Rabbi, you went to see President Moshe Katsav.

There was a thunderstorm, a misunderstanding regarding the distance, and the Palestinian drivers were not accustomed to the traffic and roads of west Jerusalem, so for the first time in nine years I was late for an appointment. My staff knew my obsession with punctuality all too well, and to arrive 30 minutes late was unthinkable. When we finally got to our destination I was mortified: the meeting had been cancelled. When I met the Milanese Rabbi Hazan that evening, I recounted my embarrassment and he lifted my spirits by reminding me that we were approaching Purim, and explained that it is written in the scriptures that if God makes you renounce something the first time, it is because He holds something better in store for you the second time. And that is exactly what happened, thank Yahweh: a few hours later I was informed that President Katsav had scheduled another appointment for Sunday morning.

What kind of man is he?

The first time I met him was in Milan for a breakfast at the Marriott. Once again I felt completely at ease – Katsav does not put on pompous or professorial airs, and our conversation

was engaging, perhaps in part because he had also been a mayor of a little town called Kiryat Malachi. Another key to our immediate sympathy was that the President is an historian with a great passion for Italian culture. He told me that his experience as a mayor had taught him how to manage the relationship with his constituents, to see their needs and listen to their views. He was well informed, as he should have been, about what we were doing in Milan with the Jewish community and the Merkos School; more generally, he was aware of our city's friendship with Israel. When I saw him again in Jerusalem, he treated me like a head of state. He explained that in the preceding five years, Italy had proven to be Israel's best friend in Europe, and that our relationship had never been so vital.

What about the political concept of 'equiproximity': that Italy should be at an equal and parallel proximity to both Israel and the PNA? Do you understand what that's about?

To tell you the truth, no.

[35] The Supreme Order of the Most Holy Annunciation (*Ordine Supremo della Santissima Annunziata*) was the primary dynastic order of the Kingdom of Italy, which ceased to be a national order when the kingdom became a republic in 1946.

[36] Stefano Dambruoso (born 15 March 1962) is an Italian prosecutor and writer.

[37] The Politecnico di Milano University is the largest technical university in Italy.

[38] Gianfranco Fini (born 3 January 1952) is an Italian politician, currently President of the Italian Chamber of Deputies and member of the centre-right party People of Freedom. Pier Ferdinando Casini (born 3 December 1955) is an Italian politician and former President of the Chamber of Deputies.

Chapter 7

Wherein are recounted tales of the Eternal City, the Holy Land and the spiritual teachers who live there.

Legend has it that fellow Milanese Henri Beyle, better known as Stendhal, intended The Red and The Black *as a record of his military and religious experiences. Without presuming to compare anyone present to the great Stendhal, I would like to hear about your various experiences in ecclesiastical contexts, including those with non-Catholic religious figures. We can start in 2000, year of the pilgrimage to Rome and the* Giubileo Ambrosiano *– Milan's own Jubilee – which culminated in St. Peter's Square in the presence of John Paul II. What impression did you have of the previous pope, and what do you recall about the Jubilee year?*

My most intense and moving memory of John Paul II is not associated with those particular circumstances, during which I had the opportunity to exchange a few words with His Holiness, but with an earlier episode dating back to 1997. It was the very first ceremony where I wore the official sash as mayor of Milan, a celebration of the anniversary of the Fondazione Don Gnocchi[39]. In fact, among the most precious mementos I have is a photograph of that moment, which I keep behind my desk. In comparison with the ceremony of 2000, the group was much smaller, and our audience with the Pope was held in a room inside the Vatican. There were just a few dozen of us, and the meeting with the Pope was quite intense.

I remember having the clear impression of the 'double reality' of the Holy Father. He approached us as an elderly man who reminded me of my grandfather at the age of 90. He walked without lifting his feet from the ground, taking tiny steps, all hunched over with an expression of great suffering on his face. He was the very picture of the fragility that comes with advanced age. Then, when we were introduced to him, he perked up and his expression changed, as if to say 'Ah, the mayor of Milan is here'. I felt a surge of pride, for his change of bearing indicated that he acknowledged the greatness of our city and its history. I drew closer to him and said, "Holiness, I am here before you without ever having remotely thought that I would be entrusted with such responsibility. I ask for your prayer that I might be able to carry a burden that is greater than my own strength". The Pope looked at me with an intense expression, revealing an inner force and energy that nearly knocked me over. And then, in a more vigorous voice, he said, "Then I shall bless you and your fellow citizens. And because you said that you need help, perhaps from on high, in carrying what you cannot bear alone, I give this blessing so that you may find the strength to do so". He conveyed the intensity that was his faith and conviction, but also an energy that only great personalities are able to transmit to the lesser men they meet. When I saw him again in 2000, the ceremony was entirely different, far greater in scale. He sat on the throne of St. Peter and observed the square, teeming with the faithful who had made the pilgrimage from Milan. For this occasion, Cardinal Martini had obtained a special concession to celebrate Mass according to the Ambrosian rite, which was extraordinary insofar as the only time a cardinal can celebrate Mass in St. Peter's Square is when a pope dies; otherwise it is the exclusive prerogative of the sit-

ting pontiff. I had the pleasure of delivering one billion lire – about half a million euros – to His Holiness as a contribution to the Jubilee on behalf of the city of Milan, and asked him once again to bestow his blessing on our city and its needs. He not only gave us his blessing, but also thanked Milan for the generous gift. At that moment I had to decide how to carry myself before the successor of St. Peter: I was torn between what I would have done as an alumnus of Leo XIII, which was to kneel and kiss the papal ring, or to limit myself to a handshake and a reverent bow, given that the Holy Father was seated and I was standing. The second, more secular gesture came to me instinctively, since I was there representing citizens of every faith, as well as agnostics and atheists. In the end it turned out well, with no breach of protocol.

That choice was much appreciated by the media and by the people of Milan.

It was generally appreciated, yes. The presence of 20,000 people at that ceremony created an extraordinary sense of community. There was the sensation of being part of a single, harmonious organism. The architecture of the square transformed the vastness of the space into a sort of maternal uterine embrace, a metaphor that is seconded by the rotundity of the dome, such that the area, though delimited, is not at all oppressive. When music is added to the recipe, which it was during the Ambrosian pilgrimage, I felt a pervasive sense of shared thoughts and intentions. It was a delightful experience. As I crossed the square, people recognised me and applauded, and there was an altar boy who asked, "Why don't you adopt me?" I replied by explaining that he had to ask his father if he agreed

with the idea. And that exchange, in that place and in those circumstances, gave me cause for reflection. We all tend to wonder what the purpose of our existence is. The responses are many, but the question of fatherhood is one that makes you really stop and think. Those who are fathers try to grasp the meaning of paternity and to judge their own behaviour as fathers. Those who do not have children, like me, ask ourselves how we can repay society the debt we owe them for perpetuating the species. And everyone wonders about the meaning of passing on life to another, and what it means for the future of our civilisation. Thinking about the pope and what our religious faith represents, there are many possible responses, perhaps none of them truly definitive. There is a universal purpose, valid for believers and non-believers alike, and that is to conduct ourselves in a way that the space we occupy in the world and what we are able to accomplish through our work, our families, our responsibilities and our intelligence ensures that humanity will progress towards a better future – in politics, society, science, art, the economy, everything. Going back to John Paul II and his gaze, I saw there the strength of a man who believes in his faith and its values.

A personal question, if I may. Apart from your Jesuit education, one gets the impression of an alternation between a firm faith and a more secular, even agnostic view, and sometimes there seems to be a sort of syncretic overlapping with the protestant outlook. How would you define yourself in religious terms?

I'll respond first with an anecdote and then with a proper explanation. The anecdote is this: Pier Paolo Pasolini was once asked if he was a believer, and he replied that it would be im-

polite to answer that question, citing the view of Monsignor Giovanni Della Casa, who felt that it was bad manners to recount one's dreams, for they matter only to the dreamer[40]. Like dreams, beliefs are intimate details, expressions of the unconscious, of one's own world of ghosts, of the aspirations and thoughts that assail us from within. Wishing to know someone else's dreams is a morbid kind of curiosity.

Nevertheless, I admit that I was a believer, to the extent that at a certain point I intended to become a Jesuit. During my adolescence I went through a crisis of faith and for a while afterwards I even felt the calling. Since I went to a religious school, I had very close relationships with my teachers and spiritual fathers, and one Sunday I visited a Jesuit seminary, thinking that perhaps one day I would complete my studies there. Then my life took another direction and over the course of time I found myself questioning my faith again – to believe, or not to believe, if you will. I'm not sure I can give a simple response to the question, and I think that's why you detected an alternation between faith and agnosticism, because it's true. Sometimes I'm convinced that religion, as Jorge Luis Borges said about theology, is humankind's greatest invention. Atomic energy, the polio vaccine, the technological innovations of our own time are nothing compared with theology. One need only think of the geniuses who worked so hard to protect us from the fear of death: Aristotle, Plato, St. Thomas, St. Augustine, Blaise Pascal. And I must confess that it sometimes intrigues me to think that religion is just a big, extraordinary invention designed explicitly to defend us against the fear of death. Whenever I spoke with Cardinal Martini, or even with the Pope, I would wonder, if only for an instant, do they really believe what they preach? Or do they only believe in the need to

believe, and then preach eternal life to protect us against fear? Almost every religion, with the occasional variant that is hostile and aggressive toward the 'infidels' who are considered potential enemies of its beliefs, teach that one must behave well in order to achieve eternal life. So, to answer your question as best I can, I admit that I'm still searching. I no longer have the certainty of my adolescence, but neither can I claim to be completely atheist, because I live in doubt.

Let's talk a bit, given that you've mentioned him several times, about Cardinal Martini, both as a religious leader and as a man.

My favorite 'version' of the Cardinal is from an episode I have recounted often, and dates to the beginning of my experience at Palazzo Marini, towards the end of June 1997. I had met him earlier, but we hadn't spoken, just a simple handshake during the election campaign at a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Alumni Foundation of my alma mater, Leo XIII. As I said, a month later I understood for the first time the difference between the Cardinal as he appears and the Cardinal as he really is. Sitting in his office, I asked him a question that has remained unaltered over time: why did I become mayor? For what extraordinary and strange reasons had I reached that position without ever having had the propensity, desire and, above all, the will to do so? I had never cultivated the dream of being mayor, yet there I was, feeling all the weight of the responsibility that I had to bear. But I'd been put there by others. I had tried to push it away, not believing it possible, and it was only when President Silvio Berlusconi asked me to run for office for the fourth time that I finally accepted. How was it that a man of such importance and stature and responsibility could

implore such a small fish as myself to bring the values of corporate governance, propriety and organisational capacity to the public sector? My dilemma between not accepting the President's invitation and thus feeling like a coward, and the serenity of staying where I was at the helm of Federmeccanica[41] fascinated the Prince of the Church. I could see that he was listening with interest, that he sympathised with my dilemma. At a certain point he decided to bare his soul and said, "The same thing happened to me. Like you, I never wanted this immense responsibility. I am a scholar, former rector of the Università Gregoriana, a man of few words and much thoughtful study. A man who loves the silence of reflection, of the elaboration of a text, who wanted only to focus his attention on the few élite students of his school. Then all of a sudden I found myself with the responsibility of this important diocese". His words were both stimulating and comforting. He continued by citing a passage from Augustine's Civitate Dei: *"Otium sanctum quaerit caritas veritatis; negotium iustum, scilicet vitae activae, suscipit necessitas caritatis. Quam sarcinam si nullus imponit, percipiendae atque intuendae vacandum est veritati. Si autem imponitur, suscipienda est, propter caritatis necessitatem. Sed nec sic omnino veritatis delectatio deserenda est; ne subtrahatur illa suavitas, et opprimat ista necessitas"*, and then translated it for me: "The love of truth seeks a holy leisure; the calls of charity compel us to undertake the labours of justice. If no one lays on us this burden, then must we devote our leisure to the search for and study of the truth. But if such a burden be imposed upon us, we must shoulder it at the call of charity. Yet we must not wholly abandon the delights of the truth, lest the latter's sweetness be withdrawn from us, and the burden we have taken up overwhelm us". Our meeting went on for so long that his sec-

retary had to knock on the door to remind him that he had another appointment. As would happen later with Putin and John Paul II, I had the pleasure of discovering the difference between the exterior image of a man and his essence. On the one hand, Martini had a hieratic appearance, the *physique du role*. A proper cardinal couldn't be otherwise: tall with an austere gaze, handsome in his dignified assertion of authority and depth of thought, his face etched with intelligence and culture, a man of few but essential and articulate words that inspire the most profound respect. On the other hand, our personal encounter was intimate enough for the Cardinal to look for the commonplaces in our respective roles and to share episodes of his life with a directness and confidentiality that, for a first meeting between strangers, made a deep impression on me. As with Montanelli, to whom I later turned for his view on a number of issues, the Cardinal's advice was conveyed using the same method – that is, he never gave me an explicit reply, but instead guided me to a point where I could figure it out for myself, socratically, maieutically. He was able to show me what deserved greater attention, where to find the arguments on which to base and defend a decision. He showed me how to winnow the essential from the futile, the important from the marginal. He also urged me to enjoy this moment of joyful victory and electoral consensus, with my staff motivated by the exciting challenge of governing Italy's second largest city, but to prepare for the criticism and the jealousy that would soon arrive. He told me I would suffer for these responsibilities, that from what he was able to see in me, I wasn't the type of person who could adapt to ethically compromising situations without resentment; that I was a man who believed unambiguously in what he thought and who did what he said, an outlook not

necessarily compatible with a world of roles and appearances. For these reasons, he told me, he wasn't entirely sure that the job I had taken was suited to someone like me. He wished me good luck because, he said, he found me different from my predecessors. Years later, he told me that of the four mayors of Milan he had known, I was the best.

Anyway, going back to the Augustine quote, a few day after this extraordinary encounter I found myself in one of those all-too-frequent situations that make one want to tear one's hair out with frustration over some malfunction or other in the machine of municipal government. At that point I stopped to take a breath and wondered if it wouldn't be helpful to reread that passage from *The City of God* that Cardinal Martini had cited and that had brought me solace. So I phoned his secretary and said, "Don Gregorio, during our conversation the other day, Cardinal Martini cited a beautiful passage from St. Augustine. I remember the gist, but I'd like to have the exact source so I can read it in moments of difficulty". There was a long silence at the other end of the line, so I continued, "Excuse me, father, perhaps my question wasn't clear…". And Don Gregorio replied, "I understand perfectly. The fact is the Cardinal has just signed a letter which I'm sending to you this very moment, in which he includes the passage you request". I asked to be put through to the Cardinal so I could share with him the emotion I was feeling. After this splendid coincidence, I framed the letter, which I still keep in my private office.

So, to conclude this portrait of Cardinal Martini, his public image is the exact opposite of his private identity. He took refuge in that image to protect himself, to keep his depth of character, his sensitivity and his intellectual acuity intact. Other people in the same role invert Martini's strategy by appearing

to be open and honest in public while remaining formal and distant in interpersonal relations. For me, Cardinal Martini was a great teacher, like the Jesuit fathers had been in my youth, and I am grateful to him for having acknowledged in me what I hope is a certain intellectual honesty, a lack of interest in power and a genuine devotion to serving the community.

He is certainly a man of great charisma. Didn't you meet the Cardinal again on your last trip to Jerusalem, in his new position at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, otherwise known as the Biblicum?

Yes, and I remember every second of that encounter. I met him at the Biblicum not long after having presented him with the Gold Medal of the City of Milan on 28 June 2002, when he gave a memorable speech before the City Council. After retiring from his official role, he had returned to his beloved Jerusalem, one of the three cities represented in his coat of arms, along with Rome, Milan and the beautiful motto *Pro veritate adversa diligere* – embrace adversity to reach the truth. When we arrived he was already at the door, punctual as always, with Suor Germana. Then, indicating that my retinue should remain in the garden with Suor Germana, he invited me into the Biblicum, where we had a long and cordial talk. I told the Cardinal what I was doing in the Holy Land, and who I'd met among the leaders of Jordan, Palestine and Israel. There was an amusing episode as well, when I recounted the story of how the Italian ambassador had refused to participate in the ceremony in Jordan where I had been honoured by the the King, on the grounds that such honours were reserved exclusively for heads of state and people of consequence. Then, with

a wry smile, the former Cardinal said, "Very interesting. It reminds me of a dream I had the other night that involved you. I was in a public hall, a conference room of sorts, when at a certain point someone asked, 'Who is the president of the republic?' There was much discussion among the audience and the panel members, then someone stood and said, 'Is it Bossi?' 'No, no!', everyone replied. Someone else ventured, 'Berlusconi?', but he was shouted down by the group. Then I stood up and exclaimed, 'Albertini!', and everyone agreed – 'Of course, Albertini! He is the president of the republic!', and so forth". Once again I saw how an apparently distant man with a rare and profound mind could also be immensely likeable, capable of an equally rare *simpatia*. We then talked about my possible candidacy for the European Parliament, and he encouraged me to get involved at the international level, emphasising what a positive experience it would be to work in the European legislative assembly after having governed a complex city like Milan. We talked at length about a number of other topics, including his health and how he was getting along in Jerusalem. He then introduced me to the dean of the Biblicum and took me on a tour of the institute, during which we admired a mummy in a glass case and other exhibits that revealed the Cardinal's typically Jesuit love of history.

Tell us about your spiritual experience walking through the old city, and the prayer at the Holy Sepulchre.

We entered and recited the Pater Noster together on the site that represents the core of Christian belief. It was truly unforgettable crossing the *souk*, talking about how much was happening in that historic moment. We were the 'condominium

of the world': on one side the Wailing Wall, on the other the Great Mosque, and all around the shops and stands of merchants of every race and religion. Then you'd walk another few steps and find yourself in another world entirely. And all of this packed into a tiny space, the *umbilicus mundi*. Cardinal Martini, responding to the journalists accompanying us, explained that what happens here is the distillation of our civilisation and our history, like a rehearsal for what can happen in the world as a whole. Jerusalem has its problems, and solutions to those problems. It is the centre of all civilisations, histories and ethnicities, the symbol of all humankind.

Do you think that this sympathy between you and Cardinal Martini has anything to do with your shared Jesuit background?

I do. With all due respect for the vast difference in our respective levels of study, I think it's true what the Jesuits say: "Give us the child for seven years, and we will give you the man". There really is a unique power in their educational approach – that is, if you stay with them. Some children can't handle it.

They also created atheists and revolutionaries.

I can think of two extreme examples – Fidel Castro and Charles de Gaulle. But even in the case of atheists, they have strong personalities. An episode from my school years comes to mind – I was 11, and the school newspaper had a column called "Our Youth", which occasionally featured articles written by students, usually those in their final years of high school. Although I was only in my sixth year of elementary school, I

had written a little article in which I presented a series of arguments against the compulsory participation in Mass, my central point being that it should be a choice rather than an obligation. I essentially said that it could not be considered an act of piety, nor an authentic expression of faith so long as it was not a free choice. I submitted the article just before the Easter vacation, and while I was at home, perhaps it was Holy Saturday, I received a phone call from the Father Rector, the school's highest authority. The school had 1,200 students, and I was no one special, just one of many. I didn't stand out, insofar as I was neither first nor last in my class, but a decent student who got decent grades. Yet here was the Father Rector, calling me. My mother answered the phone and took theatrical pleasure in handing it to me, saying , "It's the Father Rector". I took the telephone with a trembling hand, and heard the following words: "Gabriele, I read your article – bravo, written well in proper Italian, a nice fluid style. You not only know how to write, but the content is well argued. I can see that you've learned what we've taught you. And what you say is correct – an act of faith cannot be imposed, it has to be voluntary. Religious practice must be an act of choice. Well done". By now I was bursting with pride. "However, we won't be able to publish it", he continued, "and I'll tell you why. Starting next year, on 1 October, the school will adopt this principle of free choice. But we don't want those observing us, who are many – religious and secular people, teachers, students, families – to think that we were influenced by an article written by an 11-year-old. We are doing it because we think it's right. I don't know what the future holds for you. Your father is an industrialist, so perhaps you'll have the responsibility one day of governing people and resources. If so, you will need to think about

what you do and how you do it, because it will affect the lives of others, their existence, their destiny. So remember, always reflect, as I am doing with you, on how your decisions can be interpreted by others". The conversation ended there, and I was left, at 11 years old, with quite a lot to think about. As I hung up the phone I realised that the Father Rector had not so much denied publication of my article as shown me an act of great educative compassion. He had found time in his busy schedule to telephone me, one of 1,200 students, and he had done it with consummate skill and understanding, praising me by letting me know that my teachers thought as I did. While vetoing my article, he had also shown me that I was capable of reasoning at the same level as him, the maximum authority, which naturally dwarfed the issue of my article.

Let's continue our discussion of the Princes of the Church. You were once the guest of the Italian ambassador to the Holy See, Raniero Avogadro, and you had a long conversation with Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, then prefect of the Congregation of the Doctrine of the Faith and now Pope Benedict XVI.

Cardinal Ratzinger was there as the Pope's representative to officially nominate Cardinal Martini as an associate of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. Apart from the role, which lent him a certain air of intransigence, reinforced by the collective assumptions about his German origins, he quickly revealed himself a warm, spontaneous and attentive man. I was surprised when he said, "I see you often on television". This struck me as odd, since I wasn't on television very often at all.

Are you sure he didn't mistake you for Teo Teocoli, the comedian who impersonates you?

I did wonder. But I don't think it was the case, given that Ratzinger had kind words for me, and that I had a good reputation as a mayor. Later on we witnessed a spectacular dialogue between Ratzinger and Martini that reminded me of the incomparable repartee between the Count Zio and the Guardian of the Capuchins in *The Betrothed*, with the running commentary by Manzoni. Here were these two cardinals of the same age, both extremely important figures and of exceptional intelligence, whose views didn't always coincide. Every topic was an opportunity for wry observation, a velvet-gloved jab, a spiritual caress, a criticism veiled in praise.

To complete this carousel of prestigious prelates, tell us about the visit to Palazzo Marino of Jean-Louis Tauran, then the Vatican's secretary for relations with states, now a cardinal.

Having judged him open and intelligent, a high-calibre diplomat and a modern man of faith, I ventured onto a topic that was perhaps a bit out of place. In several interviews I'd posticipated around that time, I had spoken of the need to get prostitution off the streets and perhaps return to what used to be called 'houses of assignation'. I declared myself in favour of prostitution being removed from public spaces – for one, to eliminate the indecorous spectacle of it, but for other reasons too, including health concerns. Confident of my position, I began my conversation with Monsignor Tauran by recalling that in Rome, at the time of the State of the Church, there were brothels not far from St. Peter's, pointing out the paradox between the Church government's more secular approach so many centuries ago and its current strategy. At that point I noticed his expression, at once puzzled and bemused, and I re-

alised that what had been my overactive thoughts were actually coming out of my mouth, and that perhaps I'd put my foot in it. I did a quick calculation of just how much what I had said might have offended my interlocutor, and decided that it was quite a lot. But instead of distancing himself from me or the topic, he accepted my reasoning and intelligently engaged me as a person with a specific job to do, with concerns necessarily different from his own, and who might therefore be prone to say things that seem inopportune or outside papal protocol, but who is nevertheless absolutely direct and sincere. He understood that where there is authenticity, there is truth. That same evening we met again for dinner in the beautiful Tiepolo Room of Palazzo Clerici, and we exchanged a toast. This time I told him about a very moving episode that took place in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. The Mass was in Arabic, but when it came time for the Pater Noster the situation became truly Pentacostal, in that everyone recited it in their own language. There were Arabs, Englishmen, Frenchmen and of course Italians. The words were different, but the cadence and the tempo were the same, and we all finished together at 'Amen'. I recounted this episode to Monsignor Tauran, and of how it reminded me of the hope that his diplomatic efforts in the Holy Land inspired in me.

One last question about two people you met several times in Jerusalem. First of all, Monsignor Michel Sabbah, Patriarch of Jerusalem and highest ranking Catholic authority in the region, a man who plays a prominent political role as well. And then your friend Father Michele Piccirillo of the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, a great archaeologist who has directed digs in Jericho and Jerusalem.

In pulchritudine pacis is the motto of Monsignor Sabbah, which means 'in beauty, peace'. But I found very little of this sentiment in the Patriarch. He voiced a string of protests and ferocious criticism of the Israeli armed forces, who had pushed as far as the inner courts of the Church of the Nativity. The first Patriarch of Palestine did not hide his hatred for the Israeli military. I did not find in him the style one would expect from a prelate, but instead anger and strong language. *In pulchritudine pacis* has connotations of comfort and optimism, whereas I found myself standing before a combatant, a man of strong convictions.

He expressed something approaching absolution for Hamas and its social and political role.

His point was that the unspeakable suffering, crushing poverty and almost ontological desperation of a people without a homeland can justify certain extreme acts. He then offered a brutal criticism of the Israeli government. In the end, he seemed to me perhaps too politicised for the pastoral position he held, although he was very cordial with me. I was nevertheless struck by the decidedly un-priestly and highly political stance. It should be said that Father Michele Piccirillo's view of the Israelis was no less harsh, but his attitude was more serene[42]. In fact I would say that the religious figures I met in Jerusalem are much more pro-Arab than pro-Israeli. Father Piccirillo was a deeply cultured man from whom words flowed forth like a torrent. His room at the Convent of the Flagellation was jammed with books – a modest medieval cell, swollen with history. There is a contrast throughout the entire convent between the starkness of the space and the richness of the history

contained therein. There's even a small, selective archaeological museum curated by Father Michele, predictably with very 'Franciscan' furnishings.

Is it possible to draw a parallel between the Jesuits, the true intellectuals of the Church, and the Franciscans, who are both scholars and activists? We've spoken extensively of the former, but you're also familiar with the latter – Father Eligio, for example[43].

Whenever I see Father Eligio he ribs me for belonging to the Jesuits, because in his view, while they are men of faith, the flame of charity and love does not burn brightly enough within them; they are small-minded, rigid and oppressive educators. He basically considers me one of them, though our relationship is friendly and he is always generous with me. So yes, there is a difference between the Jesuits and the Franciscans that can be seen in the very spaces in which they live and work – between the Biblicum and the Convent of the Flagellation, it is immediately apparent which is occupied by intellectual spiritual fathers and which belongs to the shepherds of a flock.

Could it be said that, in Marxist terms, over the centuries the two groups have concerned themselves with different social classes as well?

That is the canonical distinction, and I think it is more or less true. There's no denying that from the time of St. Ignatius Loyola to the 18th century, the Jesuits were the spiritual fathers of the rulers of Europe.

The greatest danger, as the example of Henry VIII proves, was

not so much the popular heresies but the rulers who moved away from the Church, taking entire populations with them.

Yes, if an entire state became apostatic that presented big problems for the Church. So the Jesuits invested in the ruling classes. Then and later, their schools were traditionally attended by the children of the bourgeoisie. This distinction even extended to the physiognomy of the lives of those in the Jesuit orbit – their homes, their clothing, their speech and bearing.

We've been talking mostly about the Church. But Jerusalem is also the sacred heart of Judaism and Islam.

I'll never forget the Wailing Wall. As I walked past it, my gaze fell on that gallery to the left where rabbis read the Bible and the Talmud, against a skyline that bristles with minarets. All these things are sentinels of prayer and faith, and Jerusalem is a mystical city that seems to go on forever.

You experienced something similar at the Sultan Ahmet Camii, otherwise known as the Blue Mosque, in Istanbul, as the guest of Mayor Kadir Topbas.

That was another case of an encounter with another civilisation, a different world: Turkey which, in coming years will probably become part of the European Union. Don Giovanni of Austria will perhaps roll over in his grave, and the ghosts of the Battle of Lepanto may require some consolation, but Turkey will inevitably join the EU. Despite the fact that the would-be assassin of Pope Wojtyla was a Turk, this is the great challenge of the coming decades and this is why I voted at the

European Parliament in favour of Turkey's entry. My visit to the Blue Mosque in Istanbul was moving, if only for the privilege of being invited inside the prayer area, an honour not normally granted to non-Muslims. There was a great respect on our hosts' part for our diversity and on our part for their faith, their rites, their dignity and their convictions. Apart from this honour, I glimpsed the universal sense of humanity, united at the moment of common prayer. While the monotheistic religions may be hostile towards one another, the fact is they are the reason for hope, indeed for life for billions of people. In places like this, one can see that it doesn't matter if you believe in Yahweh, Christ or Allah: God is truly one. I felt this more intensely at the Blue Mosque than at the Mosque of Omar in Jerusalem, which I had visited more or less as a tourist. But the beauty of the Sultan Ahmet and the architectural dignity of its spaces cannot fail to convey a sense of unity among faiths with respect to a single God.

[39] A catholic NGO.

[40] Pier Paolo Pasolini (5 March 1922 – 2 November 1975) was an Italian poet, intellectual, film director, and writer. Giovanni della Casa (28 June 1503 – 14 November 1556) was an Italian poet and cleric.

[41] See note 10

[42] Michele Piccirillo (18 November 1944 – 26 October 2008) was a Franciscan monk that devoted his life to archeological and biblical studies in the Holy Land.

[43] Angelo Gelmini aka Father Eligio (born 31 July 1931) is an Italian priest that founded the NGO Mondo X.

Chapter 8

Wherein it is recounted the lost memory of ancient battles and the exploits of footsoldiers, sailors and winged horsemen.

This chapter is dedicated to another series of encounters and experiences that can generally be classified as military. Three events in particular deserve to be recounted: the 60th anniversary of the Battle of El Alamein; your voyage on the American aircraft carrier USS Enterprise; and your recent missions to Afghanistan. Let's start with El Alamein.

I must still atone for my initial resistance to the prospect of that mission. My days in Milan were full, my appointment book overflowing and at first the trip seemed a waste of resources. In hindsight, being there for the 60th anniversary of the battle turned out to be one of the most moving experiences of my life. When I entered the El Alamein shrine, I instantly felt its unique atmosphere – it felt as though the air were dense with spirits, a flux of intermingling thoughts that reminded me of the scene from *Wings of Desire* where the angel enters the state library and listens to the thoughts of everyone there, which he hears as whispers. Similarly, at El Alamein I had the sensation, emotional and physical, of intimate contact with the throngs of heroic spirits who had sacrificed themselves, along with an underlying feeling of intense patriotism. Present at the ceremony were the survivors of the battle and the families of the fallen. This was the first day of the celebrations, which were

national, while the following day was the international commemoration, attended by the then president of the republic, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi. The ceremony evoked the time, 60 years earlier, when Europe was torn by a war fought between countries of the same civilisation, the same world. Now, just a few decades later, we have the European Union, the survivors of both sides joined in respect and honour. Unfortunately, despite my repeated invitations, no such similar ceremony has yet to be held at the Field of Glory in Milan's Monumental Cemetery, where the fallen partigiani, or resistance fighters, are buried. Nor does anyone want to remember those of the Italian Social Republic buried at the Field of Honour, for no one wants to acknowledge that World War II was, for Italy, essentially a civil war[44]. But then wasn't the war fought in the Egyptian desert between Germany, Italy, France and England a civil war as well, only on a continental scale?

Why has reconciliation been possible in Spain – notwithstanding the recent revisitations of José Luis Zapatero – whose civil war was perhaps even more devastating?

That shouldn't come as a surprise. In Italy, we still have communism, either under a different guise or openly championed by those who wish to reestablish it. Let's not forget that the communist voting bloc has hovered around 30 percent of the Italian population for more than 40 years. Going back to the dunes of El Alamein, I was moved by the tombstone of a young Milanese lieutenant who had received the Silver Medal.

It had been pointed out to me by a parish priest, who asked for a photo of the mayor of Milan for the son of this fallen hero. A big surprise awaited me when I entered the shrine – an enormous burst of applause which I was initially unable to in-

terpret. Then I understood: for decades, these soldiers had been forgotten by the institutions and now, finally, they saw in me a civic authority who had bothered to come and pay tribute to them. Those soldiers sacrificed their lives for their country in a war that was lost, instigated by a dictatorship with which no one associates themselves anymore. For decades they were ghosts, dismissed as fascists, as 'revanchists', pariahs. They were disdained despite the heroism they'd shown in obeying a legitimate government. When I understood the reason for that applause, I also understood the value and meaning of having elected to go El Alamein. The minister of defense Antonio Martino gave a speech that, to my way of thinking, was inopportune. Speaking to survivors and the families of the dead, he spoke of the justice of losing an unjust war and the error of having participated in it. Why he wanted to slap them in the face, I don't know. I understand that not everything can be glorified, but it is our duty to remember the honour, commitment and unspeakable suffering of our forebears.

In addition to commemorating the battle, that trip was also intended to mark the tenth anniversary of the death of an illustrious fellow Milanese, Paolo Caccia Dominioni: architect, combatant in two wars, secret agent. It was he who built the shrine at the entrance of which a memorial plaque was placed, which you unveiled with Minister Martino and the architect's widow, who died just a few months later.

Indeed. Soon thereafter, two excellent exhibitions of his drawings were held in Milan, at Palazzo Dugnani and the Fondazione Stelline. Getting back to the way the Italians fought the war, I recall an extraordinary passage from Caccia Dominioni's *Alamein 1933-1962*, which I cited several months later,

on 4 November, Armed Forces Day, in the Sala delle Colonne of Palazzo Reale, comparing Italian *humanitas* with the inflexible rules of the Germans[45]. The story goes that a mixed patrol of Italians and Germans, commanded by a young German lieutenant, was on a night reconnaissance mission. They had infiltrated past enemy lines in order to determine possible access points to the enemy trenches. As fate would have it, the German commanding officer stepped on a land mine. Though he was seriously injured, he was still alive, but the so-called 'rules of engagement' forbade the members of the patrol from bringing him back, as this would have subjected everyone involved to further risk. A German sergeant gave the order to return to the base, leaving the wounded lieutenant to meet his maker. Our soldiers obeyed the order and returned to their quarters. Once there, the two of them began to discuss ways to go back and save the lieutenant, unable to sleep after what had happened. So, with a typically Italian interpretation of the rules, they thought outside the box and determined that they had obeyed orders until now, but were no longer in service and could therefore devote themselves to 'personal' endeavours. So they left the trenches and crawled on their bellies until they reached the barbed wire where the lieutenant lay dying, and they brought him back to the base. They had risked their lives, but their consciences were clear.

But it didn't end there.

They returned to camp, went to sleep, and not long after were woken by a German colonel. They probably expected a reprimand, but instead the officer removed an Iron Cross from his own breast, along with another medal for valour, and bestowed them upon the two young Italians. A nice little parable

about what heroism really means. Heroism is taking care of one's companions in arms, the people who suffer alongside you. Heroism is not breaking this pact, not leaving your brother when he falls.

It's also a great example of the Italian ability to improvise, in contrast to the German obsession with rules that prevented them from saving a fellow soldier, an officer no less.

The story can be read in a number of ways – historically, anthropologically, emotionally. It reminds me of Steven Spielberg's excellent *Saving Private Ryan*, but this story was told much earlier. It would make a good film, come to think of it.

Before recalling other episodes from that trip to El Alamein and Alexandria, I'd like to emphasise that Caccia Dominioni, following the armistice of 8 September 1943, became an important figure in the Milanese resistance. Though a monarchist, he was also intensely anti-fascist and was imprisoned at San Vittore[46]. He had never been able to accept the alliance with Germany; he saw the war, like the behaviour of the Germans, as extremely arrogant. In the same book mentioned earlier, he narrates how Erwin Rommel, by ordering the retreat at El Alamein, broke the front and left tens of thousands of Italians to fend for themselves on foot. I think that Caccia Dominioni, after decades of searching the desert for the remains of his fellow soldiers, wanted to pay homage to those who had fought, even if it was on the wrong side. One gets the feeling from these stories that Italy's ally wasn't much of an ally at all…

Yes, perhaps Caccia Dominioni, like Galeazzo Ciano, was one of those Italians whose family heritage left them with a sort of diffidence toward the Germans, both militarily and politically.

There's a great photograph that shows you standing next to the commemorative plaque marking the maximum Italian advance on Alexandria, alongside Filippo Berselli, undersecretary of defense at the time. The inscription reads, "Fortune lacked, but not valour".

It's true, and later at the the Al Bateen military base in the United Arab Emirates, I met again with the head of the undersecretary's cabinet; I think he was an Air Force officer.

At a certain point during the El Alamein celebrations, you were with President Ciampi at Quota 33, and eight parachutists landed within a few metres of the tribune.

They were incredible. They jumped from 2,000 metres, perhaps higher, because we could barely see the planes. Then they used directional parachutes to land not more than 10 metres from the tent that hosted the president and other authorities. The last to land was the commander of the Brigata Folgore, General Marco Bertolini, who landed without so much as a compensatory step and saluted us impeccably, at full attention. I saw one of these parachutists again several years later in Kabul.

Tell us about the evening you spent in the port of Alexandria aboard the San Giusto.

There was a reception hosted by the Department of Defense General Staff on the warship *San Giusto*. The event was packed with ranking officers and the highest military authorities, along with Defense Minister Martino and Undersecretary Berselli.

The dinner was fabulous, a greatest hits menu of Italian gastronomy. A general, or perhaps he was an admiral, invited me to a table where the heads of all three branches of the armed forces were seated, with whom I'd flown in on the prime minister's aeroplane from Ciampino. I think the commander general of the Carabinieri Corps was there, too. Many of these high officials had been to Milan during the course of their careers, so we talked about my city. Then there were others who saw me at that table and came to say hello. After the third general or so, Minister Martino joked, "Fine, I'm glad they're all so keen on talking to you, but I'm the minister of defence and you're just a mayor. Why isn't anyone talking to me?" We all had a good laugh, and I assured him that I had no intention of becoming defence minister – at least not any time soon. Who knows, though, perhaps in another life, given my passion for all things military… Anyway, at that point General Rolando Mosca Moschini, whom I'd known when he was commander general of the Finance Guard and was now the chief of defence General Staff, said with great aplomb, "Minister, sir, you must understand that our friend is only half mayor; the other half is a general". He had clearly noticed my passion for the military, or perhaps he was thinking of the flight from Rome, during which I had beaten all the heads of the armed forces at the game of matches taken from *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* by Alain Resnais. The only ones who had wisely not accepted the challenge were Mosca Moschini and Martino, having already seen me rout the commanders of the Army, Navy, Air Force and Carabinieri.

Let's move from the San Giusto to the USS Enterprise.

My 24 hours on the Enterprise date back to May 2001. I had just been reelected as mayor, so I indulged myself, thanks to the kind invitation of the American embassy in Rome, in a sort of Mediterranean 'cruise' on an American aircraft carrier. We left from Linate on an executive flight piloted by two American Navy officers. I was accompanied on my adventure by Vice-Mayor Riccardo De Corato and journalist Beppe Severgnini, the latter of whom had been introduced to me a while back by Indro Montanelli. In fact, the trip took place just a few months before the passing of that titan of Italian journalism on 22 July. I admire Severgnini, who has turned out to be an astute observer of the Anglo-American world. So the three of us arrived at Sigonella, where we were welcomed by two Italian officers from the Air Force. A few minutes later we boarded an American military twin-prop plane and took off for an unknown destination in the Mediterranean. I figured out that we were heading north-west, and the flight took more than an hour, so we may have been somewhere near Sardinia. The only difficult part was the landing on the carrier deck – because of the limited runway, the plane is violently hooked by a cable, making for a very abrupt stop indeed. When I stepped out of the plane I didn't get the chance to take in the reality of being on that majestic ship, for we were immediately led into a steel building and up a series of staircases to the officer's quarters, where I was introduced to a man who struck me as extremely young. He wore a jacket without any indications of rank, so I didn't recognise him as the commander. I understood his importance only when he presented me to his closest collaborators, all of them equally youthful. The commander of the Enterprise was in fact just 43 years old, and had been a 'top gun' Navy pilot. During this first friendly chat, the officers ex-

plained how the first American nuclear aircraft carrier worked, and Severgnini gave the commander a copy of his book about America and Americans. The commander evidently enjoyed it, for by the next day he had devoured more than half. We then climbed the command tower and I noticed a room next to the command deck – it was a gym, complete with every imaginable piece of equipment. Then we entered the command room proper and I was invited to sit in a sheepskin armchair, from which I had a perfect view of a magnificent show: the take-off of about 20 aircraft – F-18 Tomcats, A-10 Intruders and two prop planes – which then flew in formation in my honour. The squadron then buzzed the tower by way of saluting their guest, who I realised was me, the mayor of Milan. For a moment I thought I must be on a movie set. Fortunately Severgnini took some photos, so I can back up this incredible story with evidence.

I spent the rest of the day touring the ship, visiting places like the sound-proofed radar rooms bathed in ultraviolet light, full of screens that allowed them to track the location and flight path of every aircraft in the Mediterranean. The American squadron was flying missions over Tunisia and the carrier was heading south at a speed of 25-30 knots, which is about 60 kilometres and hour, like a giant motorboat. I was impressed by a number of other things as well – for example, by the physical and psychological differences between the lower-ranking American troops who did the repair and maintenance jobs and their commanding officers. The latter were more or less as we see them in the movies – lean and fit, extremely polite and respectful, with a sharp glint of intelligence and determination in their eyes. The others – and here I must say that this isn't the case in our armed forces – evinced something like social hard-

ship, and it was clear that they belonged to what Marx called the *Lumpenproletariat*. They were overweight, indolent in their movements, and seemed almost dazed. They were trained to think in terms of procedures and rules, and gave the impression that one could not expect much improvisational thinking from them. The officers obviously belonged instead to an élite. I don't know if this holds true for the American army as well, but a friend of mine, a lieutenant in the Col Moschin parachutist regiment whom I'll call Skif just in case he'd prefer not to be named, had a chance to work with the US Army on a number of occasions, particularly in Mogadishu in 1993, and he explained to me that American soldiers operate in a way that prioritises procedure, which leads them to commit avoidable errors. This, I think, is the biggest difference between them and us.

The organisation of space and time on the aircraft carrier was another thing that struck me. The ship is a technologically advanced structure, powered by a nuclear reactor, that houses around 8,000 men who live, work, sleep and eat three meals a day there. There were bunks, dining rooms and kitchens everywhere, and every square centimetre is utilised in the most efficient way possible. Everything seemed relatively comfortable despite the scarcity of space, and as far as I could tell, no part of the ship was claustrophobically cramped, as one might imagine. That same evening, after having dined in the officers' quarters as a guest of the commander, we went out onto the take-off deck as night fell. They made us wear heavy jackets to keep us weighed down, as we were only a few meters from where the jets were taking off. An officer from the flight deck crew presented me with the gift of a nail from the catapult, which I still keep like an amulet. Before going to sleep, we were taken to the

logistics bridge below, where they were simulating a scenario whereby a plane, instead of landing on the deck, crashes through the hull, causing fire and serious damage. So we witnessed this exercise as the rescue teams moved through the smoke-filled area. I was then led to a four-bed cabin that had been reserved for me alone. I managed to sleep well enough, but only because I had earplugs, since the take-offs and landings continued through the night. Well, I thought, they're patrolling for us, too. The next morning's activities featured an opportunity to fire a machine gun. Our departure, at which I was proclaimed an honorary pilot, was quite an experience: while landing on an aircraft carrier is violent because of the rapid deceleration, the take-off is amazing for the acceleration – in just a few dozen meters, the aircraft goes from zero to take-off speed, which I think is 297 kilometres per hour.

All you're missing is a night on a nuclear submarine. You'll have to ask to a US president to host you.

In compensation I had the privilege of flying in a Macchi MB339 and an F-16, thanks to our own Air Force. I must thank General Giulio Mainini for those experiences. On the first, which is a training plane, we did a low-altitude flight in August 2002. We took off from Istrana with two fighters towards the Tre Cime of Lavaredo and Cortina, an area that suffered the tragedy of Cermis several years ago and is therefore a sensitive spot for low-altitude military flights. Flights disturbed the residents and the authorities of Belluno, and on their request I opened an investigation, but the procedure was shelved because the radar records confirmed that the manoeuvres took place within the altitude norms. The plane's altimeter must

have been poorly calibrated, because I could see how the people below us were dressed. The landing on our return flight was especially exciting because we buzzed the base tower in the style of a fighter jet before touching down. Even the leftist newspaper *l'Unità* devoted an article to me by Carlo Brambilla entitled "Top Gun Albertini? 'It wasn't me on that diving plane'", which read, "He stepped from that plane delighted as a child, showing the same smile as last year when he disembarked from an American aircraft carrier. That's how he is. Since he can't play with toy soldiers any more, he relaxes for a few hours by doing 'something military'. Who knows if the child in him didn't whisper into the ear of his pilot general friend, 'Can we do a nose-dive? Can we?... vroom, yippee!'" I confirm that it wasn't me on that diving plane, but my thoughts were precisely those described by the journalist from *l'Unità*.

At the Farnborough International Air Show, you had a chance to try the cockpit of the prototype of the training craft that will replace the MB-339: the M-346, the first digitally-commanded Italian aeroplane, which has enabled Italy to close a significant technological gap. Generally though, thanks to our leadership in helicopters, the Italian aeronautics industry is doing well.

There was a time when it was the jewel in the crown of Milanese and Lombard industry, when the concentration of manufacturers between Milan and Varese was extraordinary. Then it went through a rough patch, but I think it's coming back now, Agusta-Westland being a case in point. And I have to say that Aermacchi, thanks to the efforts of my friend Massimo Lucchesini, is no less noteworthy.

Afghanistan, in December 2005 and May 2006, gave you the opportunity to see the important work of the Italian armed forces on peace and reconstruction missions abroad – forces under the 'Milanese' command of the International Security Assistance Force, the ISAF VIII of General Mauro Del Vecchio, now a senator with the Partito Democratico.

When I left in August 2005, I had promised General Del Vecchio that I would come to see him, but I didn't think that it would happen twice. The first was a pre-Christmas visit to the troops stationed there, the second for the adventurous delivery to the Afghan authorities of 40 buses and 10 trash compactors donated by ATM and AMSA respectively. Del Vecchio was the first Italian commander of such a large international force, which incorporated troops from 36 countries and covered a vast operational zone – nearly two-thirds of Afghanistan. The fact that the command was our own city's NRDC was further reason to be proud. When the command unit left on its mission, I had presented it with the flag of Milan, which we saw flying at ISAF command building in Kabul. That first trip was especially interesting because I was able to get to know the chief of defence General Staff, Admiral Giampaolo Di Paola, a little better. Which is to say that I had the privilege of talking with a brilliant personality, a renowned expert on international scenarios and highly respected by the military commands of other NATO nations. A man able to alternate the cold numbers of armaments and the defense budget with an extraordinary humanity and ability to communicate. Thanks to him, I was given permission to 'pilot' the C-130 we took from the Al Bateen base in the Emirates to Kabul – another memento for my personal collection of boyish thrills. The Kabul trip also

showed me once again the great professionalism of all our military personnel – our pilots and technicians, our ground troops, volunteers, lower-level officers, reservists, career officers. Our armed forces have made enormous progress in recent years. Referring back to the comparison with our main ally, the United States, I saw in the faces of our soldiers both professionalism and humanity. A sense of duty, intelligence, but also flexibility, which is essential when working in contexts that are always changing, with missions ranging from routine to delicate to dangerous. Less procedure and greater spirit of observation. Our standards are improving to the level of the élite. And I think that this commitment in Afghanistan, like Cavour's deployment of 15,000 men to the Crimea, is gaining us back respect at an international level. In Kabul, Del Vecchio demonstrated not only great command skills, but notable diplomatic and political gifts as well. I also have good memories of some of the officers working with him, like the commander of the Taurinense Alpine Brigade, Claudio Graziano, and the two 'Milanese' generals, Giordano and Li Gobbi.

These human and professional characteristics of the Italian forces were confirmed by all the Afghani civic leaders, from President Karzai to Vice-President Massoud, from the former king and father of the country Zahir Shah to his nephew Prince Mustapha Zahir, who played a key role in the liberation of Clementina Cantoni, one of Milan's own[47].

In gratitude for having liberated Clementina, I presented the prince with the 'Ambrogino d'Oro' in May 2006. The proof of the importance of the Italian presence in Kabul was seen upon the troops' return, when a big parade was held in

Piazza Duomo on 12 May 2006. That was also the last official appearance of Minister Martino, who spoke of the valuable contribution our troops had made around the world over the last five years and the solidarity that Milan, a secular city resistant to facile demagoguery, has always shown with regard to the sacrifice of our armed forces. This was a particularly proud moment for me, given that Italy had recently lost some of its standing in the world.

Except when we won the World Cup... You mentioned the delivery of 40 buses and 10 compactors to Kabul in early May 2006. That was quite an odyssey.

It certainly was. We had promised the equipment to the civil authorities of the Ministry of Transportation and the city of Kabul. After obtaining the generous consent of our two service companies, ATM and AMSA, we thought that the biggest hurdle had been overcome. Little did we know that we would have to face adverse conditions at sea, a strike of the port workers in Karachi, and an Islamic terrorist attack that caused more than 50 deaths, all of which generated a delay of nearly two months. And that's not all. The Afghani drivers entrusted with bringing the vehicles and compactors from Karachi to Kabul had to deal with crossing the legendary Khyber Pass on roads that were little more than mule tracks at elevations of 1,300 meters. I arrived in Kabul the day before the official presentation was scheduled, at which point the buses were only 80 kilometers outside the capital. It appeared we had pulled it off, but during the night a bridge collapsed. So, along with Italian Ambassador Francesco Ettore Sequi and his escort of carabinieri, we decided to go and meet the stranded vehicles. It was quite

incredible to see that convoy of familiar orange Milanese buses trapped in an Afghan gorge. We talked with the leader of the Afghani drivers, who was exhausted, but after convincing them of our faith in their ability to resolve the problem, the drivers rolled up their sleeves and worked all night replacing the collapsed bridge with gravel and earth, using only their hands. The vehicles arrived in Kabul the next morning, thanks to the sturdiness of the Italian buses and the ingenuity of the Afghani drivers.

We'll close this chapter by commenting on the importance of a civic presence in places like Afghanistan. In addition to troops and diplomats, there are prominent Italians in the field of international cooperation as well.

Ambassador Sequi is certainly among our most competent young diplomats. Then there are two fellow countrymen who definitely deserve mention: Alberto Cairo and Gino Strada. Two very different personalities, two different stories and two different realities. Dr. Cairo, a slight and modest man, has silently spent the last 16 years performing miracles in his laboratory in Kabul. With mind-boggling effectiveness and generosity, he has provided artificial limbs, single and multiple, to 73,000 people, and with them the possibility of surviving the unspeakable suffering of war, poverty and unimaginable sanitary conditions. Cairo gives the impression of a man consumed, like the mystics of yore who fasted among the outcasts and unfortunates. But he has combined this with the ingenuity of a technician, finding different reconstructive and rehabilitative solutions for every problem. And he also has the pragmatism and organisational skills of a good manager. My first

question upon meeting him was "What do you need?", and he said, "Send us shoes". A condition for employment in his clinics is that everyone has to be disabled – or rather, newly abled after having been treated by Dr. Cairo's organisation. And all of this is done very matter-of-factly, without drama or noise, such that very few people in Italy even know about his work. Those involved with the Red Cross, yes, but otherwise there is very little awareness of the amazing work being done. For this and other reasons, I was proud to present him with an 'Ambrogino d'Oro' upon my return.

Gino Strada[48] is another story, a media star known to all and associated with all wars. The general image of his Emergency NGO is a structure with excellent doctors with wartime experience and a number of hospitals in various crisis zones. I admire Strada's marketing ability: by dramatically deploying the imagery of the horrors of war, he manages to raise piles of money. He mentioned something in the vicinity of eight million dollars. It's interesting when I compare my encounters with the two Italian doctors. Cairo was very informal, in fact after introducing himself he had to ask which of us was the mayor because he didn't recognise me. After that he was most cordial, explaining to me how his operation functioned as he guided me around the facilities. A down-to-earth, pragmatic man whose distinguishing trait is his authenticity. When I went to see Gino Strada, carrying a tribute from the city of Milan for his hospital, I was met instead by an assistant who told me with conspicuous indifference that Strada was in the middle of an operation. I said I didn't want to disturb him and that I'd come back another time. I understood it would probably be better to have someone else show me around the hospital. At that point, one of Strada's assistants asked the soldiers accompanying me

if they could help fix an electrical generator, but they had to keep it quiet to preserve Emergency's reputation for being against soldiers, uniforms, weapons and the like. When we entered the operating room, we found Strada suturing a child in serious condition, and he left the patient to an assistant, took off his gloves, greeted me and fired up a cigarette. He explained that Emergency had done a million treatments in the Kabul hospital, whose dimensions quite frankly didn't strike me as being up to such numbers, but perhaps he was including the dispensation of medicine. Equally impressive were the results of a what he called a comparative analysis of the treatment success rates between the Emergency hospital and several of the best American emergency surgery facilities. To hear Strada tell it, his numbers were a little better, but the Americans were keeping up. I had no wish to question his claims, if only out of politeness. He then asked me when the next elections would be held in Italy, and though he comes quite often to Milan, he pretended not to know the candidates for mayor. When I told him, he urged me not to vote for Moratti and to abstain from any electoral campaigning because, he said, he and I were members of a civil society.

Nevertheless, while he may be a bit of a demagogue, we should acknowledge the fact that Strada holds the flag of Milan up high. But then he makes the curious claim that all the American and British NGOs operating in Afghanistan are really working for the secret services. If that were true, wouldn't it be secret?

Yes, that is rather curious. Meanwhile, I've learned something else I didn't know, which is that Emergency no longer operates in Afghanistan. After being accused by the Karzai government of collusion with Taleban, Strada left the country.

[44] The Italian Social Republic (RSI) was the fascist puppet state that sided with the German Third Reich during the last two years of World War II.
[45] Palazzo Reale, Palazzo Dugnani and Stelline Foundation are cultural locations in Milan.
[46] San Vittore is the main prison in Milan.
[47] The NGO operator Clementina Cantoni was kidnapped in 2005 by an illegally armed group in Afghanistan.
[48] The MD Gino Strada is the founder of the NGO Emergency that ran a number of hospitals in Afghanistan.

Chapter 9

Wherein are recounted tales of great architects, new urban alchemists and potentially perfect condominiums.

This final chapter sets out, perhaps ambitiously, to explore your thoughts on the workplace of mayors, the cities, and the role played by great contemporary and past architects in leaving defining marks on the cityscape. Perhaps the best place to start is with Sir Norman Foster.

I have to say that I admire Sir Norman Foster greatly, and not just because, among all the great living architects, he is the one I have got to know best, having met with him more frequently than any of the others and having had more time to talk, once in his incredible studio, Foster and Partners, overlooking the Thames. Over the years we have visited many of the world's cities and countless architectural works. In terms of style and my own personal taste, Foster's work is my favourite, both for its intellectual allure and for the technical quality of the buildings themselves. This is true for the new London town hall, the Reichstag in Berlin, and the Beijing airport, to mention the ones I am most familiar with. I am sorry that he has not been able to express himself more significantly in Milan, apart from the undeniably important Santa Giulia project.

And then there is Daniel Libeskind, who is perhaps even more daring. And yet, prior to meeting him, I had not been

particularly impressed by his works. But I spent some time with him last year in New York, both in his studio and during a gala dinner where he was the guest of honour. When I got the chance to talk to him, I perceived a sensitivity that is rooted in his personal history, a splendid human tale and professional story: a young Polish Jew who fled Poland together with his parents to escape communist persecution, which, if you will, picked up where the Nazis had left off. Equally tragic times, though not marked by the violence of the death camps. The Libeskind family moved to the United States, where they found, as did many others, a route to redemption and success. Libeskind told me the story of his arrival in the New York harbour when he saw the Statue of Liberty for the first time. Fifty years later, the same boy, now a successful man, won the international design competition for the construction of the Freedom Tower on the site of the former Twin Towers. This story as a man and an architect condenses all the essence of American society and America, the land of opportunity. But also the more subtle irony of the fate of a foreigner, a refugee fleeing from persecution, who is now perfectly integrated and is rebuilding something that was destroyed by Islamic fundamentalists. I believe that every now and then we see the hand of destiny in the course of things. And he will also have the opportunity to express himself in the city fairgrounds with Milan's Citylife project. That limited area – it can't be more than 255,000 square meters – will contain a skyscraper by Libeskind, a naturalised American Polish Jew, alongside the work of another great visionary architect, the naturalised British Iraqi Zaha Hadid, as well as that of the Japanese Arata Isozaki. This pluralism of designs, which places Milan at the forefront of international architecture, should silence those voices that mutter

about the minimalism and provincialism of our city. I had the chance to study the overall project, and in spite of the contrasting biographies of these three great architects, I find it harmonious: there will not be three towers of Babel speaking different tongues.

The architects Massimiliano Fuksas and Mario Botta have completed works in Milan.

In Milan's limited area (182 square kilometres, one seventh the size of Rome) we feature all the great names of world architecture. This is the achievement of the landlord and of someone who kept a low profile. So whether this happened by chance or by luck, I couldn't say. But even Napoleon was indulgent with his generals, whether they were valorous or merely lucky.

We have already talked about architecture and politics in the case of the CELAP building in Shanghai and the Berlin Reichstag, but also indirectly when we discussed the Basilica of Saint Peter and the memorial buildings in Washington. Can we return to this interesting concept? You often tend to associate the theme of ideals and values with the function of governing the city and, more generally, with the noble, civic aspect of politics.

In the history of art, I believe that architecture, more than any of the other forms of expression, demands something extra. Let me explain: all you need to paint a picture is a painter, but it took both Michelangelo and the pope to build Saint Peter's. I believe that it is from this dialogue between art and power that the most impressive works are created. And then I must

say that architecture, unlike the other arts, is immediately visible and usable. It can be appreciated by all walks of society, even by those who never set foot in museums, but simply travel the streets.

Architecture orientated "didactically" to the entire population has been used by the great democracies, for example in the United States, and also by Mitterrand with the Bibliothèque Nationale and the Louvre pyramid. And it has been used by dictators, as we see with Stalin's "teeth", the various towers he had built in different parts of Moscow.

The same was true for fascist Italy and nazi Germany, although little of the latter architecture has remained. In any case, I find it is only in architecture that ideological planning plays a dominant role, for better or for worse. It is thought transformed into physical space that in turn transforms society.

Well, regarding what little has remained in Berlin: vae victis. In June 1998 there was a mission to the German city during which it was possible to observe the progress of the Alexanderplatz designed by Renzo Piano, as well as the ruins of the Italian embassy, a gift from Hitler to Mussolini, prior to the recent restoration work. For over 50 years it was a ruin that symbolised the end of World War II and that unfortunate alliance, and it bore the wounds of the Soviet entry into the city in April 1945. The Italian embassy stood next to its Japanese counterpart, which was equally majestic because, in the rather simplistic designs of Albert Speer, architect of the Führer, at the end of the war there would have been only three great powers.

Speer was the only high-ranking Nazi who managed to conserve a significant amount of dignity and preserve the allure of his work as an architect. In the dialogue between him and Hitler we observe a very unusual relationship, another manifestation of what we talked about before regarding the way that political institutions express themselves through architecture. The same thing that happened in Moscow with Stalin also should have taken place in Berlin with the millennium dome. The only thing still standing prior to the FIFA World Cup was the Olympic stadium built in 1936.

Getting back to the embassy, I had a chance to visit it again in 2003. It had been completely restored and was fully functional, since Berlin had been restored to its role as capital. As with the Reichstag, this was a demonstration that the European civil war has definitively come to an end, that Europe is rising again, a bit enlarged, and that Europeans have reason to trust in the future. I was very pleased to see our embassy in such good condition when we organised the roadshow for the reopening of La Scala. The only thing that left me a bit concerned was the total removal of some of the distinctive signs of the fascist regime, an act of iconoclasm towards emblems guilty of evoking the 1940s. There were countless other possible methods: a curtain, doors, stuccowork that would hide those symbols from overly sensitive eyes. Instead, the radical, typically Italian solution of total removal was adopted, the diametric opposite of what Foster did with the Reichstag that provides a historical narrative, for better or for worse, of Germany and Europe in the 20th century. This testimony to the past must not be exhibited ostentatiously, but I believe it must be rigorously conserved. When one looks at things through the eyes of history and with the quest for memory, one must step back

from participating as partisans in a civil war which we now hope has ended. During the nine years that I visited the Field of Honour, celebrating the fall of the Republic of Salò, the Italian Social Republic[49], I was never once accompanied by a representative of ANPI, the national association of Italian partisans. We cannot, 60 years later, still nurture the pain and fury of those times. Certain things have to stay where they are, that is, a part of history. I think it is infantile to go on erasing. Moreover, this "democratic" removal often occurs in a more totalitarian manner than the worst dictatorships.

The same thing did not happen in Moscow with Soviet monuments.

Let's take Lenin's tomb as an example, or other vestiges of the Soviet Union, which help us to understand better what happened and remind us of the words of Santayana: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Something similar also happened in Milan at the turn of the last century, the turn of the millennium. Milan was transformed from an industrial city, with its citadels and factories, to a centre of services.

Yes, but our history was saved, as in the case of the Bicocca degli Arcimboldi, the smokestack, and the old Pirelli headquarters. In the Bicocca district, one finds one of the most beautiful works of modern architecture that I have ever seen – the new Pirelli headquarters, with a post-industrial core surrounded by steel and glass, a work of supreme beauty. We cannot erase our industrial past, even if it does represent the "bosses". It must be

exalted and given a modern setting. The same will happen for the Milan city fairgrounds, which will be rebuilt, but Giò Ponti's buildings will be preserved[50].

In recent times, there has been a rather typical, "autarchic" debate on the need to give less work to great foreign architects and more to young Italian architects. What is your position on this?

I believe that now that the first phase has been completed, responding to the accusation of provincialism and the lack of prestigious landmarks, we are ready to turn to young Italian architects, provided that they can produce competitive solutions. But this must not come about under a veil of protectionism. The same thing holds for capital: it is desirable that major redevelopment projects involve both Italian and foreign funds.

There are great works and projects dedicated to social functions in Milan as well. Do they arouse satisfaction or disappointment in you?

Let's take this step by step. Certain indelible traces have been left. First of all, there is the Teatro degli Arcimboldi, which I still like, in spite of its critics. I also feel that the design of César Pelli's Cittadella della Moda in the Garibaldi-Repubblica area is very attractive. The problem with projects for social or cultural purposes that require public financing lies entirely in coming up with the funds and in managing them. Other cases include David Chipperfield's Città delle Culture in the former Ansaldo area or the Biblioteca Europea at Porta Vittoria, designed by Bob Wilson. The restoration of an old work-

ing-class district, Ponte Lambro, with designs by Renzo Piano, is a different case. Work has been done, and work is continuing, but things are beginning to drag. I believe it is due to the difficulty in convincing families to move: we are not in China where they deport millions of people when they want to build a dam.

In conclusion, is there a perfect condominium?

Apart from Milan where, during my "guard duty", I oversaw the transformation of the city from post-industrial to neo-urban, I can think of only one other city that, despite all its difficulties, might be perfect: Jerusalem. There, rabbis read the Bible just a few meters from Arab merchants in the Levantine charm of their *souk*, where brilliantly colored fabrics, handcrafts, and characteristically scented spices are sold, where pilgrims arrive from all corners of the world, where the sentinels of prayer are found on the walls of the old town. A difficult condominium, with millennia of history and conflict, but also a workshop of hope for a future of peace among the world's peoples.

[49] See note 44.

[50] Gio Ponti (18 November 1891 – 16 September 1979) was an important Italian architect and designer.

A true leader*

It is a great and true pleasure for me to depict here the figure of Raymond Barre. Internationally renowned economist, professor at the Institut d'Études Politiques in Paris, vice-president of the European Commission for Financial and Economic Affairs, prime minister of the French Republic, I limit myself to mentioning just some of the positions assumed by this grand personage of the political history of recent decades, who must also be considered one of the founding fathers of Europe. Others have extolled this brilliant representative of European culture more aptly than I am capable of doing.

On the other hand, I feel the need to express a few words about Barre as a man and a friend, a colleague and mayor of Milan's sister city. It was in our role as mayor that we were united and that I was able to appreciate his great ability, his extraordinary courtesy, as well as his *savoir-faire*. I was struck by his perspicacity, his elegance, cordiality, culture and his deeply pondered convictions.

It was he who suggested to me the letters that I sent on various occasions to my fellow Milanese citizens. This unique relationship that connects a mayor directly to his or her city was especially dear to him, a relationship via which opinions could be asked or a balance sheet illustrated. I also used this method, for example, regarding problems of pollution due to automo-

bile traffic, the renovation of La Scala and issues of security.

During our conversations we talked about the disparity between the responsibilities attributed to a mayor by his fellow city dwellers and our real power. We exchanged ideas on the many problems that a mayor has to address and deal with. His advice has always been precious to me.

Today, the image of Raymond Barre that I retain is that of a man of great serenity and inner equilibrium. This gave him exceptional lucidity without the slightest trace of pride. He is thus for me the model of a true leader of unquestionable honesty who must remain a beacon for his collaborators.

For me, Raymond Barre has always had the strength of a conscience marked by moral rigor and balance, a conscience of enduring solidity.

*Article published in Lyon Mag, "Raymond Barre, 30 personalités témoignant", hors série, September 2007, p. 32.

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“I personally witnessed some of the international meetings ‘the first citizen of Milan’ held during his nine years in office. Now, in this book, he collects and recounts these episodes in collaboration with interviewer Andrea Vento. And it is precisely here, on the international stage, far from the flattery and trappings of Italian politics, both national and local, that the ex-mayor achieved enviable goals, ably weaving and cementing friendships that have become part of the city’s heritage”.
(*Antonio Ferrari*)

Before the fall of the Berlin Wall, cities were not concerned with international visibility: the process of “twinning” was merely a response to the post-war need to reconstruct relations, carried out in a vaguely ideological manner and limited to cultural activities. Gabriele Albertini changed all this.

More than 40 heads of state and government visited Milan; the number of visiting ministerial delegations exceeded 100; numerous mayors and regional governors were received; tens of city-twinning agreements were signed or consolidated, as well as international exhibitions, roadshows and theatre tours. Such themes are touched upon in this book as Albertini recounts curious events and episodes, offering unedited portraits of well-known personalities, original and amusing observations on the serious scene of “international politics”… of a global city.

Gabriele Albertini (born 1950) was mayor of Milan from 1997 to 2006. He has been a member of the European Parliament since 2004. He was vice-president of the Committee for Transport and Tourism and, in 2009, he was elected president of the Committee for Foreign Affairs. Together with his brother Carlo Alberto, he ran the family business. Until 1997 he was president of the federation of Italian mechanical industrial entrepreneurs (Federmeccanica). He has also published *The Mayor’s Office* (Milan 2006).

Andrea Vento (born 1967) is a journalist and historian. Since 1997 he has worked as a director of the City of Milan, reporting directly to Mayors Albertini and Moratti. He is also a reserve officer of the Italian Army and an enthusiastic pilot.

Cover: Gabriele Albertini and Queen Elizabeth II, Milan, October 2002
(Archive of the City of Milan)