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# The Portraits of the Italian Presidents of the Republic, between Officialdom and Satire

*Alessandro Giacone*

In the referendum that took place on June 2 and 3, 1946 the Italian people were asked to choose between Monarchy and Republic. With 12.6 million votes the Republic won by a margin of two million votes over the Monarchy. The last king of Italy, Umberto II, left the country for exile in Portugal. Since 1861 Italians had lived under a monarchical regime and images of the royal family were in evidence throughout the country. Conversely, for the majority of the population, the idea of a republic was but an abstract concept and, as such, it was necessary to give it both a face and an image. Immediately a competition was held to create a new emblem: a star superimposed on a cogged wheel represented work, and two branches, one of oak and the other of olive, symbolized peace and brotherhood.<sup>1</sup> Contrary to what took place in most countries, the official portrait of the President was not widely used and this for reasons that could be easily understood: after the deluge of propaganda images that had characterized the Fascist period, the Republic wanted to promote an image of solemnity and avoid personalizing its representatives. This essay will analyze the portraits of the eleven presidents of the Republic and highlight in particular the subversion of official images through the use of caricature – a practice that has become increasingly widespread in the Italian press.

On June 28, 1946 the Constituent Assembly elected Enrico De Nicola (1877–1959)<sup>2</sup> as temporary head of state, a role he was to fulfill until the new constitution took effect. A man of mediation, he played an important part in the transition from monarchy to republic,<sup>3</sup> convincing King Victor Emmanuel III to delegate his powers to his son, Umberto. The election of De Nicola in 1946 was an attempt to unite a country split into two and to win over the allegiance of the South which had voted overwhelmingly for the monarchy.

Since the establishment of the monarchy a decree had made obligatory the presence of the head of state's portrait in public offices and schools. As we shall see, this regulation was not respected during the first years of the Republic. In fact, it is difficult to classify the photograph of De Nicola, as featured on the website of the presidency of

1 Following two national competitions, the Piedmontese artist Paolo Paschetto was declared winner. The emblem that he designed was adopted officially on May 5, 1948.

2 During the interim period between the foundation of the Republic and the election of De Nicola, the role of the temporary Head of State was filled by the head of government, Alcide De Gasperi.

3 See Alessandro Giacone, "Enrico De Nicola et la transition entre Monarchie et République," in *La vie intellectuelle entre fascisme et République. Italie 1940–1948*, eds. Antonio Bechelloni, Christian Del Vento, Xavier Tabet. *Laboratoire italien* 12 (2012), 279–96.

the Italian Republic,<sup>4</sup> as an official portrait given the poor quality of the image, which is more like a snapshot than a deliberate attempt to promote the temporary Head of State.<sup>5</sup> It seems evident from this that the photograph was added only later to the series of presidential images (particularly on governmental sites): unlike the practice that exists in many other countries, in Italy there is no dedicated gallery of official portraits.<sup>6</sup> In this respect the only official initiative was made by the Socialist leader Bettino Craxi when he was Prime Minister (1983–1987): he commissioned Deanna Frosini<sup>7</sup> to paint a series of pictures of the first seven Italian heads of state.<sup>8</sup> While initially on display in Palazzo Chigi, the seat of the Italian Government, they have now been moved to a basement.<sup>9</sup> The artist depicted De Nicola in the courtyard of the Quirinal Palace, the former royal abode which became the official residence of Italian presidents, though he had never set foot there during his term of office (1946–1948): he made Palazzo Giustiniani, in the center of Rome, his abode. It was in the library of this building on December 27, 1947 that photographs were taken showing De Nicola signing the Italian Constitution. Many photographers and cameramen were present at the ceremony which took place within the library’s narrow confines; the event was also filmed from above.<sup>10</sup> One photograph, which shows a front view of De Nicola seated at the table with his head bent in the act of signing, has achieved iconic status and is invariably reproduced in school textbooks to illustrate the founding act of the new Republic (Figure 14.1). De Nicola is in the center of the scene and is surrounded by four individuals on their feet: on the right, by his young secretary, Francesco Cosentino, and by the Prime Minister, De Gasperi, and on the left by the Minister of Justice, Giuseppe Grassi, and by Umberto Terracini, the President of the Constituent Assembly. De Nicola turned to De Gasperi and uttered a single sentence: “I’ve read it thoroughly. We can sign with complete confidence.”

In 2018, on the seventieth anniversary of the enactment of the new constitution (January 1, 1948), a postage stamp and a commemorative €2 coin were issued that bore the words “con sicura confidenza” (with complete trust) (Figure 14.2). The image used on the coin reproduces exactly some elements of the original photograph, but removes Grassi and Cosentino, so that the scene is dominated by the figures of De Nicola, De Gasperi and Terracini, namely “the institutional triumvirate.” This composition

4 The official portraits of the presidents of the Republic from De Nicola to Napolitano can be viewed on the presidential website at <http://presidenti.quirinale.it/> (accessed on July 9, 2019).

5 Luciano Cheles, “Immagini presidenziali nel tempo presente: Francia e Italia,” in *I Presidenti. Storia e costumi della Repubblica nell’Italia democratica*, ed. Maurizio Ridolfi (Rome: Viella, 2014), 158–9. The front cover of this book features portraits of all the presidents (with the exception of Sergio Mattarella).

6 Official portraits are on display in the corridor of the Quirinal’s Historical Archive and in the information center for visitors to the Presidential Palace.

7 Deanna Frosini (b. 1940) has worked in theatre, journalism and cinema. Her works have been displayed at the Quadrenniale d’Arte di Roma and in many other exhibitions. Other than the portraits of Italian presidents her work has featured many supporters of the socialist movement. See Federica Di Castro *et al.*, *Deanna Frosini* (Milano: Prearo, 1991).

8 Enrico De Nicola, Luigi Einaudi, Giovanni Gronchi, Antonio Segni, Giuseppe Saragat, Giovanni Leone and Sandro Pertini (the president in post when the portraits were commissioned). Further evidence of the reserve that surrounds these portraits lies in the fact that they may not be found on any internet website.

9 I thank Luciano Cheles for this information.

10 “De Nicola, De Gasperi e Terracini firmano la costituzione italiana,” *La Settimana Incom 00111 del 6 gennaio 1948*, accessed on March 30, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XUNOOms7oLM>.

is also used, albeit seen from a different angle, on the postage stamp. The choice of figures was carefully calculated. Apart from holding the three most important offices of state in 1947, De Nicola, a member of the Italian Liberal Party, the Christian-Democrat De Gasperi and the Communist Umberto Terracini represent three different political tendencies, but at the same time symbolize the spirit of national unity that was evident during the drawing up of the constitution of the new Republic. Images of the head of state were often found on the front covers of popular weeklies such as *La Domenica del Corriere*.<sup>11</sup>

The presidents were also depicted by caricaturists. Following in the footsteps of Honoré Daumier, several satirical magazines appeared in Italy, though not before the end of the nineteenth century. The most important were *Il Guerin Meschino* (The Shabby Guerin, founded in 1882), *L'Asino* (The Donkey, 1892) and *Il Travaso delle idee* (The Decanting of Ideas, 1900) and the strongly anti-fascist *Il Becco giallo* (The Yellow Beak, 1924). Mussolini's regime curtailed drastically the activities of the satirical press, outlawing publications by other parties (1926) and making defamation of the state a crime (1930). *L'Asino* closed its doors in 1925 and a new general editor was imposed on *il Travaso delle idee*. *Il Becco giallo* was banned by the regime in 1926 but continued to be published clandestinely in France. With the return of democracy the last two publications were restarted with slightly different names: *Il Travaso* and *Il Merlo Giallo* (*The Yellow Blackbird*).

Under the monarchy it had been difficult to make fun of the head of state and it continued to be so after the birth of the Republic. However, although attacks upon the political class could be ferocious, the satire on heads of state was invariably good natured.<sup>12</sup> In 1946 a cartoon in *Il Travaso* depicted De Nicola in slippers, knitting in front of the fire. The title of the cartoon – “Pr-Pr-Pr” – presents the Primo Presidente Provvisorio (First Temporary President) as an essentially useless character who has nothing to do all day, especially when compared with Prime Minister De Gasperi.<sup>13</sup> A prominent lawyer and impartial by nature, De Nicola was a strange character with a hesitant personality. Throughout his long political career, when faced with difficulties, he preferred to resign, rather than commit himself. In February 1947 a peace treaty was signed that provided for Italy's withdrawal from its colonies and the redrawing of its borders with France and Yugoslavia. Many Italians found this humiliating and De Nicola himself did not want to ratify the measures. It was one of the reasons that induced him to resign, though officially he did so for health reasons. However, when re-elected by the Constituent Assembly De Nicola had no choice but to sign the act of ratification. In the summer of 1947 *Il Merlo Giallo* depicted De Nicola as a patient who must *inghiottire il rospo* (literally “swallow the toad,” i.e. bite the bullet) and sign the agreement presented as a diktat by the victorious Allied nations. Standing by him, De Gasperi and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Carlo Sforza, are shown as two

11 Antonella Mauri, “*La Domenica del Corriere* e la rappresentazione dei Capi di Stato,” in *Il ritratto e il potere. Immagini della politica in Francia e in Italia nel Novecento*, eds. Luciano Cheles and Alessandro Giaccone (Pisa: Pacini, 2017), 57–81.

12 For some caricatures of the presidents of the Italian Republic, see especially Angelo Olivieri, *Sette anni di guai, I Presidenti della Repubblica nella satira* (Bari: Dedalo, 1992).

13 <http://frame.technology/dev/vitepresidenti/de-nicola/la-satira/> (accessed on 9 July, 2019).

doctors telling him to “close [his] eyes and open [his] mouth” and swallow the bitter medicine (Figure 14.3).

De Nicola’s successor was the leading economist Luigi Einaudi, president of the Republic from 1948 until 1955.<sup>14</sup> When offered the post, Einaudi’s initial reaction was to refuse because, following an accident, he walked with a cane; in other words, he feared that his physical condition would prove a handicap during official ceremonies.<sup>15</sup> No official photographs were taken when he was elected President. However, in May 1950 a deputy asked a parliamentary question expressing regret that a presidential portrait was not displayed in public buildings. The Secretary General of the Quirinal, Ferdinando Carbone, subsequently suggested to Einaudi that he choose one from a set of pictures taken by his friend Domenico Peretti Griva<sup>16</sup> or commission a new photograph.<sup>17</sup> Einaudi, a very thrifty person, chose the first option to avoid incurring expenses he considered unnecessary. Luciano Cheles has shown that, though the available photographs included a full-length portrait, he preferred a head-and-shoulder version of it that attenuated his distinguished appearance.<sup>18</sup> The portrait depicts him as a stern man with a bundle of papers in his hand: the image of a sober and respected economist. The walking stick, visible in the full-length portrait, has been cut out. Einaudi’s photograph was sent to all who requested it, but was not exhibited in public places. Neither were the portraits of his successors: in 1965 the Minister of Education complained again about the absence of presidential portraits in schools.<sup>19</sup>

A statue of Einaudi was realized in 1949 by his friend Pietro Canonica (1869–1959), an internationally known academic artist who had been commissioned for celebrative sculptures by several European heads of state, including the Czar of Russia and the Turkish President Atatürk.<sup>20</sup> The work, now at the Museo Canonica in Rome, is realistic but with an element of stylization (Figure 14.4). A striking feature is the total lack of symbols related to Einaudi’s presidential status. This contrasts with the bust of Victor Emmanuel III, which Canonica had executed in 1938 showing the king in military uniform with royal insignia (Figure 14.5). The representation of Einaudi is muted most probably at the request of the President himself, who was trying to affect a clean break with the pomp of the former regime. In 1952 Canonica was made a Life Senator for his outstanding contributions to art.<sup>21</sup>

Einaudi’s effigy later featured on two commemorative postage stamps. The first was issued in 1974 on the hundredth anniversary of his birth: it is a rather simple image in which the economist is shown wearing a pair of round-framed glasses and without any

14 Riccardo Faucci, *Luigi Einaudi* (Turin: UTET, 1986).

15 The episode is described by Giulio Andreotti in *Visti da Vicino, Seconda Serie* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1983), 3–4.

16 Ferdinando Peretti Griva (1882–1962), an anti-fascist magistrate, was also an accomplished photographer. He was a leading exponent of the pictorialist movement in Italy. See Chiara Dall’Olio, *Domenico Riccardi Peretti Griva e il pittorialismo italiano* (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini, 2012).

17 Carbone to Einaudi, August 21, 1950, Torino Fondazione Einaudi, *Fondo Luigi Einaudi*, Einaudi/ Carbone.

18 Cheles, “Immagini presidenziali,” 159.

19 Letter from the Minister of Education, Luigi Gui, October 8, 1965, Archivio centrale dello Stato, PCM (1968–1972), 4.15/13554, b.597.

20 The idea of sculpting a monument to Einaudi came from the artist. See *Stampa Sera*, March 8, 1949.

21 According to the Italian Constitution, the President of the Republic can nominate five citizens “for outstanding contributions to society, science, the arts and literature.”

other distinguishing features. The second, issued in 2012, re-uses the official portrait, this time in color, superimposed upon an image of the Quirinal Palace, to allude to the fact that Einaudi was the first head of the Italian Republic to reside there.

Einaudi's presidency was also an important moment in the history of Italian political satire. When the law was passed that approved the establishment of presidential administration, the former Premier, Francesco Saverio Nitti, launched a campaign against "the mad expenses" of the presidency to discredit Einaudi who liked to appear as frugal. In 1948 a cartoon in *Il Guerin Meschino* depicted a rotund, well-fed Nitti remarking upon a very skinny Einaudi: "Now that he is President of the Republic, see how he's become fat!" In another cartoon the thrifty economist is harangued by his wife: "You've bought yourself some new braces! You must be mad! What will Nitti say!" These presidential caricatures were, however, the cause of a celebrated court case between Einaudi and Giovanni Guareschi, the author of the famous *Don Camillo* saga. In 1945 Guareschi founded the humorous weekly publication *Candido*, which had both royalist and anticommunist leanings. As well as articles and stories, *Candido* included satirical pieces often aimed at Einaudi who was also the owner of an important wine business.<sup>22</sup> In 1950 the Republic was depicted as a woman crowned with a tower (the symbol of the independent communes of medieval Italy<sup>23</sup>) next to a bottle of Nebbiolo wine<sup>24</sup> with the advertising slogan "Drink to Einaudi!" In the same year the humorist Carlo Manzoni published a cartoon in which the President's silhouette, tiny but still identifiable from his walking stick, is inspecting the *Corazzieri* (the presidential guard), who are in fact represented as two lines of bottles (Figure 14.6). On behalf of the President, Carbone pressed charges against both Guareschi, as editor of the publication, and Manzoni, as the creator of the offending cartoon. While awaiting a verdict Guareschi replied by representing *Candido* as a small mustachioed man chained to two huge bottles of Nebbiolo. Initially the two accused men were found not guilty by a court in Milan, but on appeal were given an eight-month suspended sentence by Italy's Supreme Court. A few years later Guareschi was found guilty in a different trial and spent nearly a year and a half in prison without any presidential pardon. The Einaudi/Guareschi affair belongs to a different epoch in which any expression of contempt toward the head of state could result in severe punishment. The *Candido* case explains why, for more than a decade, political satire in the press and on television almost always refrained from making fun of the nation's president.<sup>25</sup>

Einaudi's successor, Giovanni Gronchi, was the first Christian-Democrat to hold the title of head of state (1955–1962)<sup>26</sup>. His official portrait (the photographer is

22 For a more detailed account, see Alessandro Giaccone, "Caricature e vilipendio al Capo dello Stato. La vicenda Einaudi-Guareschi," in Cheles, Giaccone, *Il ritratto e il potere*, 113–21.

23 On turreted Italy, see Edoardo Novelli, "Il volto della Patria. Iconografia e narrazione simbolica della Nazione" in *Comunicazione politica* 1 (2011), 111–20.

24 Nebbiolo is a famous Piedmontese wine of which Einaudi was a producer.

25 In 1959, during a visit by Charles de Gaulle to Italy, a gala performance was staged at the Opera House in Milan. President Gronchi fell while his chair was being moved. Two famous comic actors - Ugo Tognazzi and Raimondo Vianello - re-enacted the scene on a television channel run by the state broadcasting company, RAI. As a result they were dismissed immediately.

26 Alessandro Giaccone, "Giovanni Gronchi," in *I Presidenti della Repubblica. Il capo dello Stato e il Quirinale nella storia della democrazia italiana*, eds. Sabino Cassese, Giuseppe Galasso, Alberto Melloni (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2018), 159–83.

unknown) was taken in a photographic studio, as evidenced by the standard head-and-shoulders and three-quarter profile format.<sup>27</sup> The new President's slight smile and his modern spectacle frames differentiated him from Einaudi's solemn looks. In 2018, Gronchi's official portrait featured on a postage stamp that commemorated the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his death.

Giovanni Gronchi was the first mass-media President: he gave many interviews and magazines frequently published images of his private life (a rare occurrence with Einaudi). Of the photographs taken during his seven-year presidency one of the most famous shows Gronchi kneeling before Pope Pius XII during an official visit to the Vatican (December 6, 1955). This gesture was not spontaneous but a part of the official arrangements: by kneeling the first Christian-Democrat President wanted to display his deference toward the Catholic Church. One cannot help be struck by this aesthetic photograph: the Pope in full regalia blesses the President who wears the Order of the Golden Spur, which he has been conferred, around his neck (Figure 14.7). As was to be expected, the gesture was widely criticized in Italy for it appeared as an act of subordination toward religious authorities. A few months later Gronchi made an official visit to the United States. *Il Merlo Giallo* carried a cartoon drawn by Livio Apolloni which showed the Italian President at the U.S. Congress (where he was making an important speech) accompanied by a sarcastic comment from Uncle Sam: "I had prepared the usual kneeling stool, but, instead, he wanted to go up on stage" (Figure 14.8). Gronchi's interventions in Italian foreign affairs led to many clashes with the government, which treated them as interferences, an assault upon its powers. In another *Merlo Giallo* cartoon,<sup>28</sup> published during Gronchi's visit to West Germany in December 1956, shows him introducing his Foreign Minister Antonio Martino to Adenauer. The German Chancellor replies: "Well I never! You've actually got a Foreign Minister!"

Antonio Segni, a Christian-Democrat who was President from 1962 until 1964, had been the architect of the Agrarian Reform of 1950, but later swung toward a more conservative position.<sup>29</sup> Segni had been elected to the Quirinal for his moderate views, to counterbalance the recently formed center-left government to which he was personally opposed. The official portrait, again taken by an unknown photographer, shows nothing remarkable: the President's gaze is turned conventionally toward the left and his face stands out against a dark background.<sup>30</sup> Segni had the look of a physically weak man: a cartoon, drawn by Livio Apolloni Segni in 1962, depicted him as a slender, emaciated man with a suspicious look. In fact, he had a tenacious character. The leading conservative journalist Indro Montanelli remarked of him that he had "an iron constitution." In August 1964 he suffered a stroke and was forced to resign four months later. During this time the Italian population displayed great affection toward him. Segni was perceived as the 'Good President,' a man who was above political squabbling, as illustrated by a cartoon published by *Il Corriere lombardo* just after his

27 Cheles, "Immagini presidenziali," 158. During his foreign visits this and other similar images of Gronchi were enlarged and displayed alongside those of the host nation's head of state.

28 The cartoon is by Giuseppe Russo, alias Girus (1888–1960). <http://frame.technology/dev/vitepresidenti/gronchi/la-satira/> (accessed July 9, 2019).

29 See Salvatore Mura, *Antonio Segni, La politica e le istituzioni* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2017).

30 As we shall see, these are the same characteristics that are found in the official portraits of Giovanni Leone and Sandro Pertini.

resignation (Figure 14.9): it shows him quietly walking away from the Quirinal Palace, leaving Italian politicians fighting among themselves. The reality was quite different: Segni had been the leader of one of the Christian-Democrat party's litigious factions. However, the cartoon is a good example of the respect that heads of state commanded at the beginning of the 1960s.

It is ironic that in the midst of the group of politicians brawling in the *Il Corriere lombardo* cartoon one can see the man who was to become Segni's successor: Giuseppe Saragat, a member of the Resistance movement who had spent the Fascist period in exile, and was elected President of the Constituent Assembly after the war.<sup>31</sup> He quit the Socialist Party, of which he was a member, when this formed an electoral alliance with the Communist Party and founded what would become the Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano (PSDI). The official portrait of Italy's fifth president was the work of the well-known photographer, Ghitta Carell (whose signature is visible on the picture).<sup>32</sup> Saragat's presidency (1964–1971) coincides with the revival of the political comics in Italy.<sup>33</sup> One of the most important was *Linus*, founded in 1965, which featured comic strips such as Charlie Schulz's *Peanuts* and Elize Crisler Sagar's *Popeye*. It was the first Italian anti-establishment comic to be published in Italy, and was able to attract many talented cartoonists. They included Tullio Pericoli & Emanuele Pirella, who loved caricaturing Saragat and after his presidency ended, often represented him as a pensioner who spent his days sitting on a park bench.<sup>34</sup>

The events of 1968 unleashed a storm of irreverence: young artists no longer hesitated to attack the authorities, and the highest office of the State was not spared either. Coming from Piedmont, Saragat had a taste for wine, something that was not lost on cartoonists. The magazine, *Marc Aurelio*, founded during the Fascist period,<sup>35</sup> drew him in a dining room full of wine bottles: a good-natured joke, but something unimaginable only a decade earlier.<sup>36</sup> Saragat was often criticized for his habit of sending telegrams constantly, a habit which earned him the nickname of "Peppino O'Telegramma" ('Joe the telegram' in Neapolitan dialect). When in 1969 the astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin set foot on the moon, the joke spread in Italy in which one asked the other: "What's that fluttering next to the American flag?" The other replied: "It's a telegram from Saragat." A cartoon published in the right-wing magazine *Il Borghese* in 1971 at the end of his first term of office shows the President from behind, recognizable by the glass of wine in his hand, declaring: "And then, if I don't get re-elected in December, I'll finally have the chance to publish a collection of all my telegrams" (Figure 14.10).

The presidency of Giovanni Leone (1971–1978) took place against the difficult background of the *anni di piombo*, which were marked by both left- and right-wing terrorism. Leone, a Neapolitan lawyer and jurist had twice been prime minister. He

31 Federico Fornaro, *Giuseppe Saragat* (Venice: Marsilio, 2003).

32 In 2018 this portrait would also be reproduced on a postage stamp to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of Saragat's death.

33 Franco Fossati, *Guida al fumetto satirico e politico* (Milan: Gammalibri, 1979).

34 See the following section, dedicated to the presidency of Leone.

35 Many future film producers and screenwriters, among whom Federico Fellini, Ettore Scola and Cesare Zavattini, worked at the magazine. The atmosphere in the editorial office of *Marc Aurelio* is evoked in Scola's film, *Che strano chiamarsi Federico* (2013).

36 <http://frame.technology/dev/vitepresidenti/saragat/la-satira/> (accessed July 9, 2019).



had his official portrait photograph taken by his fifteen-year-old son Giancarlo.<sup>37</sup> After enjoying some initial popularity, Leone became the target of the press when he indulged in behavior considered unbecoming his position (singing Neapolitan songs during foreign visits, for instance). The photograph that best seems to sum up Leone's presidency was taken in 1975. During an official visit to Pisa, a group of extreme left-wing students shouted "Death to Leone!" The President replied with the "horn gesture," the clenched fist with the index and little finger extended that is supposed to ward off bad luck. He had done this on other occasions, but never before had the gesture been captured by photographers. The Head of State eventually became a kind of comic stooge, lampooned by the press on a daily basis. The President's honesty was also placed doubt by a series of scandals, especially the Lockheed Affair, which involved in many world politicians.

The far-left newspaper *Lotta Continua* published a series of cartoons entitled *Il Naso del presidente*<sup>38</sup> in which the President's nose was transformed into the shape of a Lockheed military aircraft.<sup>39</sup> The attacks culminated in 1978 when the journalist Camilla Cederna (later found guilty of libel) savagely attacked him in a pamphlet entitled *Giovanni Leone, la carriera di un presidente*.<sup>40</sup> Leone's period of office coincided with the rise of the cartoonist Giorgio Forattini, author of collections of cartoons that became undisputed national bestsellers. *La Repubblica* newspaper, founded in 1976, carried each day a Forattini cartoon on its front page that provided a scathing comment on current politics. A comic strip by Pericoli & Pirella, published on November 20, 1977, depicted Leone sitting next to his predecessor Saragat on a park bench and explaining to him that at the end of his term in office he would be free to do exactly what he wanted, like "singing with emigrants, defending small-time crooks in court and *fare le corna*." Saragat's response was: "This man must have really suffered."<sup>41</sup> The end of Leone's term was dramatic. The President looked on helplessly as the Red Brigades kidnapped the Christian-Democrat leader Aldo Moro, whose body was eventually found on May 9, 1978. One month later, politically isolated and abandoned even by his own party, Leone was forced to resign. Forattini's cartoon portrayed him swallowed up in a whirlpool: only his hand remains visible, determinedly making its famous horn gesture (Figure 14.11).

The presidency of Sandro Pertini (1978–1985) represents a key moment in the history of the Republic.<sup>42</sup> Pertini was a Socialist who had been a prominent figure of the Resistance and spent much of his youth in prison during Fascism. Elected at the age of 82, he enjoyed extreme popularity on account of the image of great probity he conveyed – an image that struck a chord in a period marked by numerous scandals – and of his informality and ability to communicate. His official portrait, the work of the

AU: Note 38 is not cited in the text as well as in the foot note section so we have renumbered the notes please check and confirm.

37 Cheles, "Immagini presidenziali," 160.

38 Vincino, *Il naso del Presidente* (Rome; Savelli, 1976).

39 During the years that followed his presidency the courts recognized Leone's total lack of involvement in the affair.

40 Camilla Cederna, *Giovanni Leone, La carriera di un presidente* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1978).

41 Tullio Pericoli and Emanuele Pirella, *Falsetto, cronache italiane dei nostri giorni* (Milan: Bompiani, 1982), 132.

42 Andrea Gandolfo, *Sandro Pertini dall'accesa al Quirinale allo scandalo della P2 1978–1981* (Rome: Aracne, 2017). Also Gandolfo, *Sandro Pertini. Dalla stagione del pentapartito agli ultimi anni 1981–1990* (Rome: Aracne, 2018).

Cantera photographic studio,<sup>43</sup> is in many ways conventional, though the strong light adds a dramatic quality to it. The intense gaze aptly expresses his determined character; the contrast of light in the photograph seems to cut the face in two. However, the images of Pertini that enjoyed the greatest popularity were the non-official ones that depicted him as a good-natured, smiling grandfather figure with a pipe in his hand (he was, incidentally, a keen pipe collector). It is one of these portraits, rather than the official one, that was chosen for the postage stamp issued in 1996 to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of his birth.<sup>44</sup>

Many consider Pertini to be the first “pop president” on account of his unconventional behavior, often tinged with a certain degree of populism, and of his constant presence in the mass media. His presidency coincided in fact with the media revolution of the early 1980s, which saw the development of private television networks. Pertini was interviewed, filmed and photographed on an almost daily basis; his appearance in the media ensured high audience numbers and newspaper and magazine sales. One of the most famous images of his presidency, which was to become an Italian icon of the 1980s, was taken at the 1982 World Cup Final held in Madrid: it shows Pertini celebrating the victory of the Italian team, a victory that united a politically divided nation, with the enthusiasm of a little boy (Figure 14.12). A friend of many artists, Pertini was the subject of numerous statues and pictures, some of which are kept at the Turati foundation in Florence and at the Sandro Pertini and Renata Cuneo museum in Savona, although they have never been exhibited publicly.<sup>45</sup>

Pertini was fond of political satire. Having been a newspaper editor who also dealt with its pictures, he was aware of the problems faced by cartoonists. In the lengthy interview that he gave to writer and semiologist Umberto Eco, published in a collection of satirical drawings by Pericoli & Pirella,<sup>46</sup> he remarked: “The first thing I do when I buy *la Repubblica* is to look at the cartoon.” He confessed to collecting all the caricatures that featured himself. Pertini, a big fan of the French satirical weekly *Le Canard Enchaîné*, told Eco that he would have loved to see a similar publication in Italy. During an official trip to France in 1982, Pertini visited the magazine’s headquarters in Paris. He is the only political figure to have ever been granted such a privilege by a weekly that has always been proud of its political independence and is well known for its iconoclastic attitude to authority. Cartoonists loved drawing Pertini. A Forattini drawing greeted Pertini’s election on July 8, 1978 by representing him as a sprightly old gentleman, with his beloved pipe in mouth, flying toward his destiny on a broomstick shaped like a carnation, the symbol of the Socialist Party<sup>47</sup> (Figure 14.13). Even the far-right was benevolent toward him. *Il Secolo d’Italia*, the official organ of the neofascist Movimento Socialista Italiano, drew Pertini as the bowl of a pipe with

43 Cheles, “Immagini presidenziali,” 160.

44 <http://www.iboli.it/php/em-italia-2529-Ritratto%20Alessandro%20Pertini.php> (accessed July 9, 2019).

45 Internet sites accessed April 25, 2019. <http://www.fondazionestudistoriciturati.it/archivio/collez-pertini1986-1990/> and [http://www.comune.savona.it/IT/Page/t09/view\\_html?idp=423](http://www.comune.savona.it/IT/Page/t09/view_html?idp=423). Twelve pictures are kept at the Fondazione Turati in Florence. I thank Stefano Caretti for this information.

46 “Quando facevo le vignette anch’io” (“When I too drew cartoons”), The discussion between Umberto Eco and Sandro Pertini in Tullio Pericoli & Emanuele Pirella, *Falsetto, cronache italiane dei nostri giorni* (Milan: Bompiani, 1982), 5–9.

47 The carnation had been chosen by Socialist Party secretary, Bettino Craxi, as the official party symbol in memory of the Portuguese “Carnation Revolution” of 1974.

the caption “calumet della pace” (“the pipe of peace”).<sup>48</sup> Pertini’s presidential mandate coincided with the appearance of *Il Male* (The Evil), a weekly magazine published between 1978 and 1982.<sup>49</sup> Inspired by the caustic and irreverent style of the French magazines *Hara-Kiri* and *Charlie Hebdo*, *Il Male* broke every taboo, viciously attacking even the Pope and Aldo Moro during his period of imprisonment in the hands of the Red Brigades. However, when it came to represent Pertini, a tamer approach was pursued: one cartoon shows him at the wheel of a sports car with a young woman at his side: “The Republic’s 30th Birthday, Pertini’s 80th.”<sup>50</sup> Andrea Paziienza, one of the cartoonists of *Il Male*, built up a special relationship with the ‘partisan-president’: in a series of drawings representing “Pert e Paz,” the artist imagines himself with Pertini during the Resistance. The image of two wary characters waiting for the enemy (the future President is shown sucking on his pipe while holding a rifle), was to be constantly reprinted after the artist died aged thirty-two.<sup>51</sup>

The Christian-Democrat Francesco Cossiga, elected president at the age of fifty-seven in 1985, was the first not to belong to the generation of founding fathers of the Republic. He had been Italy’s youngest Minister of the Interior, Prime Minister and President of the Senate. His official portrait sought to give an impression of modernity:<sup>52</sup> Color was used for the first time and the image features the Italian flag together with a tapestry in the background. His presidency, which coincided with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the beginning of the collapse of traditional party system, is usually seen as being divided into two distinct phases: during the first five years he kept a low profile; then he started to intervene in public affairs more virulently, criticizing the government, the political parties and the magistrature.<sup>53</sup> Cossiga defined the views he expressed as *picconate* (pickaxe blows), as a result of which cartoonists represented him wielding the tool in question. Cossiga’s term of office was marked a renaissance in political satire. *Cuore*, the satirical supplement of the Communist daily *l’Unità*, began to appear in 1988. Its editor, Michele Serra, assembled the cream of Italian cartoonists: Staino, Altan, Vincino, Vauro and Ellekappa. In 1991, *Cuore* became a periodical in its own right and enjoyed considerable success with weekly sales of up to 140,000, a record for any Italian satirical publication. Cossiga the pickaxe-man became one of its main targets. The front cover of May 27, 1991 depicted Cossiga in full-flow, surrounded by *Cuore*’s cartoon characters who, driven to desperation, are plugging their ears. The caption goes: “We give in. Just shut up!”

The last four presidents of the Republic will be dealt with more briefly. The Christian-Democrat Oscar Luigi Scalfaro was elected in dramatic circumstances in 1992 after the

48 <http://frame.technology/dev/vitepresidenti/pertini/la-vita-privata/> (accessed July 9, 2019).

49 Oreste del Buono, cited in Franco Fossati, *Guida al fumetto satirico e politico*, 185.

50 [https://www.dagospia.com/mediagallery/dago\\_fotogallery-44212/351281.htm](https://www.dagospia.com/mediagallery/dago_fotogallery-44212/351281.htm)

51 See the collection of comic drawings by Andrea Paziienza, *Pertini* (Rome: Fandango libri, 2010). This volume includes a memoir by Dario Fo.

52 From Cossiga onwards the task of photographing official portraits was no longer given to private studios but to the Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato (State Printing Institute and Mint) under the supervision of Claudio Milza. See Cheles, “Immagini presidenziali,” 160.

53 Ludovico Ortona, *La svolta di Francesco Cossiga, Diario del Settennato* (1985–1992) (Turin: Aragno, 2016).

assassination of the anti-mafia judge, Giovanni Falcone.<sup>54</sup> His official portrait (which was reproduced in 2018 on the postage stamp commemorating the centenary of his birth) shows Scalfaro in the traditional head and shoulder, three-quarter pose with an Italian flag in the background. He props his face on his left hand to hide his double chin and wears the discretely small pin of the head of state (a feature that was to be copied by his successors) thus breaking with the tradition that the president should be indistinguishable from the ordinary citizen. Scalfaro's presidency (1992–1999) was troubled by investigations that led to the break-up of most of the political parties that had founded the Republic. Having been a magistrate in his younger days, Scalfaro backed the crusading efforts of the Milanese judges who discovered a web of corruption that came to be known as *Tangentopoli* (Bribesville), but at the same time condemned some judges for methods used to obtain confessions from politicians. In his end-of-year speech on December 31, 1997, the President described as “deplorable” the “jangling of handcuffs in the faces of those being questioned.” This expression, which referred metaphorically to detainment in police custody, became well known, also thanks to satirical cartoons in which the President can be seen rattling a pair of handcuffs against the background of the presidential palace.

Carlo Azeglio Ciampi was the first President not to be a member of any political party (though in the immediate post-war period he briefly joined the Partito d'Azione, an antifascist liberal-socialist party). The Governor of the Bank of Italy from 1979 until 1993, Prime Minister from 1993 to 1994, and Minister of Economic Affairs from 1996 to 1999, Ciampi was a key figure behind Italy's adoption of the Single European Currency. His election to the presidency on the first ballot, in which he gained the approval of almost all political parties, was a clear recognition of his achievements in this area. During his presidency (1999–2006) Ciampi made efforts to relaunch the idea of national identity (he reinstated the celebration of the National Day which had been abolished in 1977) and to strengthen pro-Europeanism.<sup>55</sup> The background of his official portrait is similar to that of Cossiga: Ciampi is photographed before a tapestry, next to the national flag. The President has adopted a piercing, slightly frowning expression,<sup>56</sup> a sign of his authority. Like Pertini, Ciampi enjoyed great popularity and satirists always treated him well. In an interview, Forattini admitted that it was difficult to make fun of someone he liked: he depicted him as a good-natured, tail-wagging dog called Ciappi, playing on the similarity of the Head of State's name to that of a well-known dog food. Forattini devoted a series of cartoons to him that represented him as the “Pedigree President” intent on making a speech in front of the nation's flag (Figure 14.14). The volume is dedicated to the President “who for the first time, more than fifty years after the birth of the Republic, has officially used the word Motherland.”<sup>57</sup>

The former Communist Giorgio Napolitano continued Ciampi's work of defending pro-Europeanism and the idea of the Motherland. His presidency (2006–2015) was the longest of the Republic's history: it stretched over two terms.<sup>58</sup> The official portrait

54 Giovanni Grasso, *Scalfaro, L'uomo, il presidente, il cristiano* (Milan: San Paolo, 2012); Guido Dell'Aquila, *Scalfaro, democristiano anomalo* (Florence: Passigli, 2018).

55 Umberto Gentiloni Silveri, *Contro scettici e disfattisti, Gli anni di Ciampi (1992–2006)* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2013).

56 Ciampi's thick eyebrows were the physical characteristic most frequently highlighted by cartoonists.

57 Giorgio Forattini, *Ciappi, un presidente di razza* (Milan: Mondadori, 2002).

58 Vincenzo Lippolis and Giulio Salerno, *La presidenza più lunga. I poteri del capo dello Stato e la Costituzione* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2016).

photograph of 2006, re-used after his re-election in 2013, displays some innovations: Napolitano looks straight into the camera (only Gronchi had done so before), and the background includes the European flag and some shelves with books to indicate that the setting is the presidential library. These details portray Napolitano as a cultivated and fervently pro-European figure. Cartoonists often lampooned Napolitano: an exhibition of caricatures entitled *Napolitaneide*, organized at Forte dei Marmi in Tuscany in 2012, included more than one hundred drawings.<sup>59</sup> Of particular note is the work of Emilio Giannelli who, after Forattini's retirement, became the undisputed "prince" of Italian cartoonists. His drawings began to appear on the front pages of the *Corriere della Sera* newspaper in 1991. Due to a certain physical likeness to Umberto II, the last king of Italy, Napolitano was nicknamed "Re Giorgio" (King George). In 2013 Giannelli drew him wearing a crown and ermine cape together with a caption that mimicked Louis XIV's motto "L'État c'est moi" (I am the State): "L'État" has however been turned into "L'età" (The age) – a reference to the fact that Napolitano had been re-elected at the age of 88 (Figure 14.15).

The official portrait of the current President, the Christian-Democrat Sergio Mattarella (in office since 2015) features a tapestry and the Italian and European flags. In the background<sup>60</sup> Forattini celebrated Mattarella's election by playing with his name, which evokes the *mattarello* (rolling pin): he drew a *Mattarella* being flung at a turreted Italy (Figure 14.16). During his first years in office the current President has been notable for his great discretion, limiting his public declarations to a minimum, and this against the growing trend of employing social media. Giannelli's cartoon depicts Mattarella as Michelangelo's famous statue of Moses: legend has it that when the artist had completed his sculpture and gazed upon the perfection he had created, a perfection which lacked only the power of speech, he exclaimed: "Why don't you talk?"<sup>61</sup>

A number of conclusions can be drawn from this brief examination of the official portraits and cartoons of the Italian presidents. After the years of Fascism and of the monarchy, during which images of both the Duce and the king were omnipresent, the Republic has preferred a more reserved approach, demonstrated by the absence of portraits in schools and public spaces. Shying away from pomp, the residents have presented themselves without any insignia of power. The presidents' official photographs are now in color and feature more symbolic elements, the principal ones being the Italian and European flags. However, the approach remains restrained to promote the idea of a Republic where the president is no different from any ordinary citizen.

Satire is a well-established art form in Italy. During the Fascist period and just after the war, self-censorship and caution prevailed. Cartoonists later became savagely irreverent, particularly so during periods of social upheavals. Unlike party figures, Italian presidents are treated benevolently by cartoonists, mindful of Article 87 of the Constitution which declares that they represent national unity and cannot therefore be depicted in an undignified way.

59 <http://www.affaritaliani.it/politica/al-via-la-mostra-satirica-su-napolitano280512.html> (accessed April 25, 2019).

60 Exhibited in Italian public spaces, the official photograph of the President can be seen on the official website of the Quirinale: <https://www.quirinale.it/page/biografia> (accessed July 9, 2019).

61 [https://www.corriere.it/foto-gallery/la-vignetta/18\\_ottobre\\_01/vignetta-giannelli-d37511e2-c53b-11e8-994e-6382a2ca0409.shtml](https://www.corriere.it/foto-gallery/la-vignetta/18_ottobre_01/vignetta-giannelli-d37511e2-c53b-11e8-994e-6382a2ca0409.shtml) (accessed July 9, 2019).



*Figure 14.1* President Enrico De Nicola signs the Constitution, 1948.



*Figure 14.2* Two Euro coin, issued in 2018. The relief on the front side image is based on the photograph in Fig. 14.1.



— Coraggio, chiudete gli occhi e aprite la bocca...

Figure 14.3 “Come along and close your eyes.” Cartoon by Girus, *Merlo Giallo*, 1947. (From: Angelo Olivieri, *Sette anni di guai, I Presidenti della Repubblica nella satira 1946-1992*, Bari: Dedalo, 1992).



Figure 14.4 Plaster bust of President Luigi Einaudi by Pietro Canonica, 1948, Museo Pietro Canonica, Rome. (© Roma – Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali).



Figure 14.5 Plaster bust of King Victor Emmanuel III by Pietro Canonica, 1936, Museo Pietro Canonica, Rome. (© Roma – Sovrintendenza Capitolina ai Beni Culturali).

## AL QUIRINALE



I corazzieri.

Candido, 1950 - dis. Manzoni

Figure 14.6 “The *corazzieri* (honor guards of the President).” Cartoon by Carletto Manzoni, *Candido*, 1950. (From: Olivieri, *Sette Anni di Guai*).





Figure 14.7 President Gronchi kneeling before Pope Pius XII, during a state visit to the Vatican, 1955.



Figure 14.8 “Gronchi at Congress. Uncle Sam: ‘I had prepared the usual prie-dieu, but he wanted to come to the rostrum instead.’” Cartoon by Apolloni, *Merlo Giallo*, 1956. (From: Olivieri, *Sette Anni di Guai*).

## IL PRESIDENTE BUONO SE NE VA



Figure 14.9 “The good President is leaving.” Cartoon by Manca, *Corriere Lombardo*, 1964. (From: Olivieri, *Sette Anni di Guai*).



Figure 14.10 “[President Saragat:] ‘And then, if I don’t get re-elected in December, I’ll at last have the chance to publish a collection of all my telegrams.’” Cartoon by Fremura, *Il Borghese*, 1971. (From: Olivieri, *Sette Anni di Guai*).



Figure 14.11 “[President] Leone resigns.” Cartoon by Forattini, *La Repubblica*, 1978. Scala, Florence.



Figure 14.12 Sandro Pertini rejoices at Italy’s victory at the World Cup, 1982.



Figure 14.13 Sandro Pertini elected President. Cartoon by Forattini, *La Repubblica*, 1978. Scala, Florence.



Figure 14.14 “Ciappi, a pedigree President.” Cartoon by Forattini, *La Repubblica*, 2002.

Au: Plesae check this caption of Figure 14.17.

Fig. 14.17: “King George, I am the State/age.” Cartoon by Giannelli, *Il Corriere della Sera*, 2013.



Figure 14.15 “King George, I am the State/age.” Cartoon by Giannelli, *Il Corriere della Sera*, 2013.



Figure 14.16 Mattarella/Rolling pin running after Italy. Cartoon by Forattini, *La Repubblica*, 2002.

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