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Abstract

The article focuses on the legal proceedings between Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi and editor Giovannino Guareschi at the Milan tribunal in Italy. Guareschi was convicted of libel counted upon by the British evidence. He was accused of forgery of the letters that he reproduced against De Gasperi.

Disciplines

Italian Language and Literature

‘No, niente appello!’: How De Gasperi sent Guareschi to prison

[*The Italianist*, n. 25, 2005, ii: 239-259]

Alan R. Perry

Non capisco perché debbano fare la perizia, giacché mio marito ha affermato di non aver mai scritto quei documenti. (Francesca De Gasperi)

De Gasperi lo querelò. Ne scaturì un processo in cui, però, nonostante le formali assicurazioni, non fu ammessa la perizia grafica sulle lettere in possesso di Guareschi. Esse vennero considerate false sulla base della parola di De Gasperi. (Antonio Di Pietro)

Per rimanere liberi, bisogna a un bel momento prendere, senza esitare, la via della prigionia. (Giovannino Guareschi)

No one could have suspected the political bombshell *Candido* editor Giovannino Guareschi dropped on the Italian political scene in early 1954. As it occurred, it almost seemed like something that belonged to the *Mondo Piccolo*, the imaginary world Guareschi created that had brought him untold commercial and popular success. Indeed, in the realm of Don Camillo and Peppone, inflammatory accusations were daily occurrences. But this claim seemed to go beyond what anyone had reasonably come to expect from Guareschi’s caustic pen that lampooned the real world of Italian Cold War society and politics. In 1948 Guareschi had stood fast with then Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi to defeat the Popular Front. Six years later, any semblance of continuity between the inveterate allied enemies of Communism came to an abrupt end.

Guareschi accused De Gasperi of having asked the Allies during World War II to bomb the periphery of Rome in order to incite a popular insurrection against the Germans. He backed his claim with a photocopied letter that carried De Gasperi’s signature. Soon thereafter, he published another missive, this time entirely written in De Gasperi’s hand. The former Prime Minister brought a criminal suit against Guareschi for his inflammatory commentary that accompanied the letters. The April trial lasted four

days and captivated the nation. In the end, a Milan tribunal found Guareschi guilty of libel. Incensed by what he experienced as a lack of justice, Guareschi refused to appeal. He spent the next fourteen months in a Parma prison.

Unfortunately, misconceptions about the case began to form immediately after the verdict, and over time they have become crystallized as part of the official record.

Numerous historians, literary critics, and journalists believe the court condemned Guareschi not for libel but for having published false documents, a judgment that, in reality, the court never decided. For example, the *Storia della Democrazia Cristiana* (1988), documents the case in this manner:

Si trattava, in realtà, di un falso che faceva parte di un gruppo di lettere apocrife, che comprendeva anche un carteggio tra Churchill e Mussolini, da tempo offerte in vendita ad imprese editoriali e perfino al governo dietro richiesta di compensi vari (tra i quali amnistie, licenze d'importazione ecc.). De Gasperi sporse querela contro il direttore del *Candido*. Il processo, che si svolse a Milano dal 13 al 15 aprile 1954, riuscì a provare la falsità del documento pubblicato e costò a Guareschi la condanna ad un anno di carcere.¹

Other misunderstandings exist as to how the court came to its decision and what motivated Guareschi not to seek an appeal.

It is time to set the historical record straight. A close examination of the official proceedings of *De Gasperi v. Guareschi* will show how enough misplaced discredit has been strewn upon Guareschi's memory to warrant a revision of facts. A study of the case's intricacies will also shed light upon the sway that De Gasperi's moral stature had upon the Italian judiciary in the early 1950s. As such, to begin our inquiry and comprehend the proceedings in full, we must first appreciate both Guareschi's evolving relationship with De Gasperi and the history behind the two documents Guareschi used to disparage his adversary. In the process, we will better appreciate why by January 1954 Guareschi considered the former prime minister as Italy's greatest enemy.²

I. Disenchantment with De Gasperi and coming to possess letters in Mussolini's dossier

When Guareschi founded *Candido* in 1946, still adjusting from his World War II experience of twenty-one months as a German prisoner of war, he staunchly supported the retention of the monarchy. Although he felt bitter when the referendum sent King Umberto II and his family into exile, he resolved to pour his energies into defeating the Popular Front. Guareschi loathed Communism, fearing that its political philosophy robbed people of their capacity to think freely for themselves. He also harbored misgivings about the power of the Christian Democrat Party (DC), but he found a staunch ally in the anti-Communist Alcide De Gasperi. For Guareschi, De Gasperi had been the principal statesman who had forged the Republic in the precarious times of the *dopoguerra* [Reconstruction], and for this achievement he had earned Guareschi's respect. He referred to De Gasperi as 'l'uomo politico più intelligente d'Europa, dopo Churchill'.³

Together with De Gasperi, Guareschi played an important role in defeating the Popular Front (the Socialist-Communist coalition) in 1948. His anti-Communist satire in *Candido* gripped reader attention, and two influential political posters that he designed were plastered on walls and kiosks throughout the Italian peninsula.⁴ *Life* magazine reported that two men, De Gasperi and Guareschi, had primarily won the Italian elections.⁵ In time, however, the growing might of the DC began to worry Guareschi, who saw its power as potentially capable of unduly commanding the will of the Italian people. He firmly disliked how the DC took advantage of its favored status with the Church, and he often exhorted the party not to foment confusion among the electorate concerning the distinction between the two.⁶

Over the course of 1952 Guareschi grew despondent with the DC and its leadership, believing that the promised political reforms they championed never materialized.⁷ More and more, Guareschi distanced himself from the DC and gave public support to the Monarch Party. The definitive break with De Gasperi — at the time no longer the Prime Minister — occurred with the fall of the Pella government. As the pages of *Candido* reveal, Guareschi believed that De Gasperi had instigated a sneaky, underhanded vote of no confidence for Pella since he had moved too far to the Right. In this vein, De Gasperi purportedly toppled a leader of his own party because he wanted Mario Scelba to preside as Prime Minister, a biased move that would better enhance his own chances at becoming President of the Republic.

Infuriated at this supposedly unscrupulous maneuver, Guareschi saw De Gasperi as a stealthy political sharpshooter who knocks off adversaries with ruthless determination and accurate aim. Thus, in the 24 January 1954 edition of *Candido*, Guareschi entitled an invective against De Gasperi ‘Il Ta-pum del cecchino’, recalling to mind the popular song from World War I about the lethality of sharpshooters. The article proved to be the most provocative of Guareschi’s career, an essay of tremendous consequences. In it, Guareschi claimed that De Gasperi had been duplicitous to the point of treachery.

To prove his point, he reproduced a letter De Gasperi had presumably written during World War II from the Vatican, where he had gained asylum. The missive, written on Vatican letterhead and dated 19 January 1944, was addressed to the English Lieutenant Colonel Bonham Carter and read:

Egregio signor Colonnello, non avendo ricevuto alcun riscontro in merito alla mia ultima del 12 gennaio '44, mi permetto di trascriverle interamente il contenuto della precedente, rimasta fino ad oggi senza esito.

Tramite un corriere P.O. affidiamo la presente contenente la nostra più ampia assicurazione che quanto S.E. il Generale ALEXANDER desidera venga effettuato, come azione collaterale da parte dei nostri gruppi Patrioti, sarà scrupolosamente attuato.

Ci è purtroppo doloroso, ma necessario, insistere nuovamente affinché la popolazione romana si decida ad insorgere al nostro fianco, che non devono essere risparmiate azioni di bombardamento nella zona periferica della città nonché sugli obiettivi militari segnalati.

Questa azione, che a cuore stretto invociamo, è la sola che potrà infrangere l'ultima resistenza morale del popolo romano, se particolarmente verrà preso, quale obiettivo, l'acquedotto, punto nevralgico vitale.

Ci urge inoltre, e nel più breve tempo possibile il già sollecitato rifornimento, essendo giunti allo stremo.

La preghiamo pertanto, nel più breve tempo possibile di assicurarci di tutto, e di credere nella nostra immutabile fede nella lotta contro il comune nemico nazi-fascista.

Degasperi⁸

Guareschi also referenced how a handwriting expert had deemed the letter was genuine, a declaration subsequently validated by a *notaio* [public notary]. He knew the seriousness of the charge and clearly wanted his readers to know what authentication process had led him to publish the letters.

What really stung Guareschi was not that De Gasperi had requested that the Allies bomb Rome, but that he had passed himself off as an official representative of the Vatican by using the letterhead in order to give weight to his request. As Guareschi commented: 'Non è un gesto incosciente e stolto: è un vero e proprio sacrilegio. Non è un semplice gesto di uno che tradisce l'ospitalità, è il gesto nefando di un cattolico che tradisce il Santo Padre'.⁹ Thus, for Guareschi, the letter proved that De Gasperi would seek to achieve his political ends by any means necessary. If he could take advantage of one supranational entity, what could he do to his own political party or to the nation itself? Guareschi exploded: 'Freddo, spietato, privo di ogni scrupolo, feroce, se occorre, De Gasperi è in questo particolare momento l'uomo più pericoloso che l'Italia si possa trovare alle costole'.¹⁰

The allegations could not have come at a more inopportune time. The political climate in the early 1950s, shaped so powerfully by the dominant Christian Democrats and the Church, allowed little room for caustic opposition. In many respects, the DC leadership felt threatened by a possible loss of power and efficacy.¹¹ A few months prior to Guareschi's accusations, the government had cracked down hard on film critics Renzo Renzi and Guido Aristarco, arresting them for 'vilipendio delle Forze Armate' because they had published in *Cinema Nuovo* a condemnation of the Italian campaign in Greece.¹² The DC leadership was simply hypersensitive to criticism.¹³

Of course, in excoriating De Gasperi for an alleged political ploy, Guareschi seemed reckless and foolhardy, naive at best, for in the collective imagination of the early 1950s, De Gasperi was anything but a villain. Generally considered as the father of the Italian Republic, he had no plausible rival. He had uncannily managed successive coalitions, negotiated a favorable peace treaty, and kept the Communists out of government. Guareschi went after a public icon at a time when his character was above reproach.

From Rome, De Gasperi reacted swiftly, issuing a press release denying the accusation, explaining that he had previously seen a counterfeited letter on Vatican letterhead with his signature. Obviously, he claimed, it had come back into public circulation.¹⁴ The following day he repeated his denial, explaining that he had earlier rejected attempts by blackmailers who had approached him with purportedly compromising documents; now these usurers had found a gullible buyer in Guareschi.¹⁵ The counter-campaign started, and the Catholic press began to rail against Guareschi. *Il Popolo* for example called him 'disonesto, cinicamente bugiardo, ciecamente disumano'.¹⁶

For his part, Guareschi had not finished his assault. A week later, accompanied by the same attestations of authenticity, he published another note, this time entirely handwritten and not under a letterhead. It seemed as though the first letter had never reached its destination, for it read:

Carissimo,
Spero di ottenere da Salerno il colpo di grazia. Avrete presto gli aiuti chiesti. Coraggio, avanti e sempre, per la Santa Battaglia, auguri buon lavoro e fede.
26 Gen. '44

Degasperi¹⁷

Guareschi also for the first time gave a hint that he was aware how grave the charges were, indicating that he had to follow his conscience in sustaining his claims in the face of a justice system about to bring its full weight down upon him. He stated: 'Io bado molto alla mia coscienza; preferirei essere condannato dalla Giustizia ed essere assolto dalla mia coscienza piuttosto che essere assolto dalla Giustizia ed essere condannato dalla mia coscienza. Io so che in questa vicenda il vero imputato non sono io, è De Gasperi. E la parte lesa è la Nazione'.¹⁸

The accusations and rebuttals between the two highly visible public figures became a public sensation, especially after De Gasperi formally brought suit against Guareschi for libel on 6 February 1954. The occasion actually marked the second time in Guareschi's life that he faced such charges. Three years earlier an appellate court had given him a suspended sentence of eight months for a series of vignettes that lampooned President Luigi Einaudi.¹⁹ In the present case, if the court found him guilty, he was sure to receive in full the reinstated penalty of the earlier ruling. Guareschi, however, pressed ahead, supremely sure of himself.

His confidence stemmed from an encounter he had with Enrico De Toma, a former Republic of Salò officer and Mussolini aide-de-camp. De Toma had convinced

Guareschi that at the end of World War II the Duce had given him a dossier to secure in Switzerland; it contained documents that the Duce wanted published five years from that time should he happened to be killed. Thus, after several failed attempts to sell the documents in the dossier to either the media or government officials, De Toma sought out Guareschi and the forum of *Candido*.²⁰ Once in possession of the letters, Guareschi went to a handwriting expert, Umberto Focaccia, who vouched their authenticity. When a public notary, Bruno Stamm, certified Focaccia's competence, Guareschi felt most optimistic that the letters were genuine and part of a more complete series of letters and memoranda that belonged to a dossier Mussolini had supposedly spirited to Switzerland during the waning days of the Republic of Salò.

The mystery surrounding the existence of documents Mussolini kept, many of which detail his allegedly secret relationship with Winston Churchill, has piqued scholarly and popular interest since the end of the war and sparked lively debate. Emilio Re in *Storia di un archivio* provided one of the first historical studies of the various dossiers found among Mussolini's private and official archives after the war but does not spend great length surmising if Churchill and Mussolini maintained a secret correspondence. Other works that treat the story of the purported dossier include Peter Tompkin's *Dalle carte segrete del Duce*, Renzo De Felice's *Rosso e nero*, Arrigo Petacco's *Dear Benito, caro Winston*, and two works by Fabio Andriola, *Mussolini-Churchill: Carteggio segreto* and *Appuntamento sul lago*. Tompkins holds that the dossier did exist, that Churchill had specifically sought to recover it, and that it was eventually returned to the British government in the 1950s. De Felice believes that many documents found in Switzerland written by Mussolini are authentic, but that the letters Guareschi published were most likely false. Andriola and Petacco hold a similar position,

stating that many of Mussolini's documents are genuine but that among those presented by De Toma some are forgeries.

Furthermore, as Petacco recounts, journalist Ferruccio Lanfranchi first published a long article for the *Corriere della Sera* on 31 March 1950 and later a second dated 17 April 1951 that attempted to establish the dossier's existence and itinerary. Guareschi explained in *Candido* that Lanfranchi's second article had caught his eye, and that he had begun to follow stories concerning the alleged file over the span of three years.²¹ Once De Toma had given him the letters which were subsequently authenticated, he believed that he was legally obliged to consider the notes *bona fide* because of the avowal provided by the *perito calligrafico* [the handwriting expert].²²

The court case was set to begin on 13 April 1954 under the auspices of a Milanese tribunal. Guareschi had two capable defenders, Vincenzo Porzio and Michele Learner, and he assumed that the court would appoint calligraphy experts able to determine that the missives were legitimate. For his part, De Gasperi made a shrewd tactical move in appointing Giacomo Delitala as legal counsel and head of the prosecutorial team: Delitala had intimate knowledge of his adversary since he himself had defended Guareschi in the Einaudi case three years earlier. The actual proceedings provided many surprises.

II. The Case and Guareschi's Attempts at Defense:

De Gasperi had charged Guareschi on two counts: first with libel and second for knowingly having published false documents. Initially presenting Guareschi's defense, Lerner petitioned the court to consider determining the latter charge first rather than proceed with the former.²³ In theory, he surmised, if Guareschi could prove that the letters were indeed authentic by way of chemical and handwriting analysis, this would render

the first charge untenable. If Guareschi's damning words about De Gasperi's character were based on genuine and not counterfeit documents, it would have been impossible for him to have libeled De Gasperi because he would effectively have been speaking the truth. Once Guareschi proved the letters were authentic, so Learner thought, the charge of libel could not possibly stick.

Delitala countered this motion, arguing that regardless of the authenticity of the documents, Guareschi's stinging claims themselves had soiled De Gasperi's reputation. The court thus had one question before it and not two: 'in questa sede l'imputato Guareschi deve rispondere di un unico processo, e cioè di diffamazione a mezzo della stampa e non pure di reato di falso'.²⁴ The Pubblico Ministro also agreed that the case before the court concerned libel and not malice.²⁵ The tribunal overruled Lerner's petition to determine the veracity of the letters first before proceeding with the charge of libel. The trial thus would specifically try Guareschi for libel and not render judgment on whether or not the letters were authentic.

The direction the case took, as determined by the court with this decision, is important for two primary reasons. First, in popular lore the case has always been seen as having decisively determined that the letters were false. But, as the proceedings clearly detail, the trial determined libel based on the essays that accompanied the letters. In the end, the tribunal never officially determined the authenticity of the documents one way or another.²⁶ Second, with its decision, the court squarely placed the burden to establish that the letters were authentic on Guareschi, who could only hope that the tribunal would later accept his petition to have the letters examined. He faced an uphill battle. De Gasperi, on the other hand, only had to convince the court that Guareschi's words alone themselves were libelous.

In its formal introductory procedures (the *interrogatorio*), the court allowed Guareschi to read a full explanation of his actions that detailed his long journalistic interaction with De Gasperi as politician. Guareschi emphasized emphatically that he aimed his diatribe at De Gasperi's political position and not at his honor as an individual: 'Non pubblicai le lettere in questione per diffamare De Gasperi in quanto esse sono di per sé stesse la manifestazione di una normale azione di Guerra. [. . .] Io ho sempre criticato sul mio giornale il "politicante" e non già l'uomo, che non mi interessava'.²⁷ Guareschi also explained how he came to possess the letters, communicating his awareness that the documents in Mussolini's dossier could have been fabricated and stating firmly that he never would have published a part of such a file without the utmost certainty that the letters were authentic.²⁸ He then responded to various questions posed by the court that further detailed his understanding of how government agents had tried to acquire the dossier since the end of the war.²⁹

Alcide De Gasperi responded with his official deposition, carefully insisting that he never could have written such letters since his seeking to have Rome bombed would have been so unfathomable:

Insisto ancora nell'affermare che le due lettere pubblicate sul "Candido" sono apocrife.

Io non ho mai tenuto alcuna corrispondenza con degli elementi anglo-americani. È semplicemente assurdo che io allora, quale segretario della biblioteca del Vaticano avrei usato della carta intestata per chiedere un'azione di bombardamento su Roma, contrariamente ai quei principi a cui si informava tutta l'attività del Vaticano stesso.

Le lettere di cui è causa non le ho mai scritte e voglio precisare che sono di un contenuto completamente assurdo e ridicolo.

Non ho mai conosciuto il Col Bonham Carter, non solo, ma sconoscevo completamente l'indirizzo di Salerno della base aerea degli Alleati. [...]

Ripeto una volta che il contenuto delle lettere è illogico ed assurdo, perché contrario al mio principio di uomo politico, non solo, ma non c'era alcun motivo che io richiedessi il bombardamento della periferia di Roma quando la medesima città veniva bombardata lo stesso, nonostante fosse stata dichiarata città aperta. [. . .] È ingenuo

pensare che un uomo che ha avuto l'onore di governare l'Italia per sei-sette anni possa avere la leggerezza di scrivere delle lettere del tenore come quelle di cui è causa.³⁰

Once he established a moral alibi via his historical accomplishments, De Gasperi evoked the sacred memory of the Resistance: 'Se io avessi scritto le lettere in questione sarei venuto meno a quegli obblighi che mi vincolavano al Comitato di Liberazione nazionale, ed anche, come ho già detto, agli obblighi verso la S. Sede'.³¹ Thus, De Gasperi's first testimony relied heavily on establishing the improbability of his supposed action while also summoning his role in a sacrosanct movement that had legitimated the Italian democratic experience after the war.³²

Through an interpreter, the court next heard testimony from retired Colonel Arthur Desmond Bonham Carter who had flown in from England. He denied that he had ever been stationed at Salerno in the Peninsular Base Section; he affirmed that he had never heard of De Gasperi until after the war; and he swore that he had never received, at any time, any form of communication whatsoever from him.³³

After listening to Bonham Carter, an interpreter read a letter from Field Marshal Harold Alexander. He too stated he had never heard of De Gasperi until after the war and explained how a request to bomb Rome in and of itself would have been extremely unusual. Most requests he had received concerning the Eternal City aimed at the direct opposite: 'the alleged letter contains a request that Rome be bombed and suggests that this request had been made previously. My recollection is that all requests reaching our headquarters at that time on this subject were invariably to the effect that Rome should not be bombed, and such records as I have been able to consult confirm this'.³⁴

The court then called Bruno Stamm, the public notary, to testify. Stamm, who had vouched for Focaccia's expert opinion, affirmed that he had two letters in his possession in Locarno, Switzerland — specifically the originals of the ones Guareschi had published

and no letter dated 12 January 1944 — and that he was ready to have them sent to the Tribunal at a moment's notice. With his statements, the first day's proceedings ended.

The following day, 14 April 1954, proved decisive for the prosecution. Under oath, De Gasperi recounted the facts relevant to how the government had made attempts to ascertain if certain alleged documents from Mussolini's files, in circulation since the early 1950s, were authentic. He related that in 1953 investigators had traveled to Switzerland and studied documents that purportedly compromised the integrity of certain government officials. According to De Gasperi, an agent claimed that he had seen a series of numbers on a letter dated 12 January with the Vatican letterhead, but that when he checked with the Vatican's official registry of correspondence, the numbers did not match.³⁵ De Gasperi further stated that the search for such documents had not been undertaken as a result of an official mandate.³⁶

The tribunal then heard from Lerner who asked permission to interrogate six witnesses that could refute De Gasperi's claims. Specifically, Lerner wanted the court to consider why several government agents had sought the documents and had even offered money to purchase the documents in the dossier. Lerner wanted to establish that De Gasperi feared that something in the dossier compromised him, thus establishing a reason to believe the letters were authentic.³⁷ More importantly, Lerner petitioned the court to perform a chemical and handwriting examination of the two letters that had arrived from Locarno under Stamm's care.³⁸

The proceedings had reached a crucial moment. Up until this point, De Gasperi had attacked Guareschi by casting doubt of his ever having written the letters. De Gasperi had not proven definitively, however, that he had not actually written them. With the opportunity for scientific analysis, Guareschi would now have the chance to demonstrate

how De Gasperi could plausibly have written the letters. But Delitala asked that all the requests made by Guareschi be denied since, as he sustained, nothing would truly be gained in granting them and the delay would further damage the moral character of his client.³⁹ Lerner countered, continuing to insist that scientific examination be undertaken.

Initially, the Pubblico Ministro agreed with the defendant.⁴⁰ At this pronouncement, however, Delitala masterfully manipulated the sensibilities of the court, expounding the implications that such an analysis would have for De Gasperi's honor. Referring to the testimony provided by Bonham Carter, he mused aloud what more proof was necessary — ‘Che, si vuole di più dopo le prove decisive già fornite?’ — and then implored:

Mi rivolgo alla vostra coscienza e vi dico: se voi accettate la perizia calligrafica vuol dire che avete ancora dei dubbi. Vuol dire che pensate che De Gasperi può anche averle scritte. Vuol dire che non credete alla deposizione di Bonham Carter, alla lettera di Alexander, che credete possibile l'assurdità del modo, dei tempi, dei luoghi in cui quelle lettere avrebbero dovute essere scritte. E dopo non avere ritenute sufficienti le prove puntuali oggettive che noi vi abbiamo fornito, crederete a una perizia? E se il perito dirà: “Sembra, forse”? Capovolgerete il processo?⁴¹

Upon hearing these words, Guareschi knew he had lost the case. In the next edition of Candido, he wrote:

L'argomentazione del Professore è formidabile: ordinare una perizia significa mettere in dubbio il giuramento di De Gasperi. Significa esprimere pubblicamente il sospetto che De Gasperi possa giurare il falso! [. . .]

Ecco la chiave del processo. [. . .] l'avevo già capito dove volesse andare a finire il Professore e già avevo dichiarato: “Stando così le cose si tratterà di un anno in galera.”⁴²

Delitala's gambit wielded the fatal blow. At stake was which to believe -- the work of a trained expert or the oath of an honorable statesman backed up by the word of two British officers. The judges had to assume the responsibility of possibly finding that De Gasperi had perjured himself, the very man who had nobly led Italy out of the tumultuous *dopoguerra* and stood as a bulwark against the threat of communism.⁴³

After approximately an hour, the court reconvened and delivered its pronouncement, rejecting Guareschi's request to present his witnesses and submit the letters to scientific analysis since they were deemed to be 'del tutto inutili, essendo la causa sufficientemente istruita ai fini del decidere'.⁴⁴ In effect, the Court ruled that it was not necessary to subject the letters to testing because De Gasperi, as a result of testimony and witnesses presented, had so overwhelmingly shown the implausibility of his ever having written the missives. As such, although it did not do so officially or directly, the Court was saying that the letters were false without definite proof, effectively sacking any further options for Lerner to defend Guareschi.

Lerner rose from his bench, publicly decried the ruling, removed his gown, and stormed from the courtroom.⁴⁵ The following day, the judges read the guilty verdict, justifying their finding in the following way:

Dalle considerazioni di cui innanzi, anche senza tener conto dei dinieghi della parte lesa che, per aver prestato giuramento, per il nostro sistema processuale, va creduta, appare evidente che le lettere riportate sul "Candido" non possono essere che false.

La richiesta perizia grafica, con tutte le incertezze insite in tal genere di perizia, non avrebbe potuto apportare alcun lume anche perché, nella migliore delle ipotesi per l'imputato, una semplice affermazione del perito non avrebbe mai potuto fare diventare credibile e certo, ciò che obiettivamente è risultato impossibile e inverosimile.

La perizia perciò non avrebbe detto nulla per quanto riguarda la prova del fatto addebitato all'offeso e sarebbe soltanto servita a procrastinare una decisione che, con gli elementi acquisiti, poteva e doveva già essere precisa.

Forse la perizia avrebbe potuto rivestire una certa utilità per altri fini e altre persone ma ci troveremmo in un campo del tutto diverso da quello nel quale siamo tenuti ad agire ed il Tribunale non ha la pretesa di fare la Storia mentre ha il diritto di rendere giustizia a chi fiducioso gli si rivolge.⁴⁶

Thus, while the Tribunal declared that De Gasperi had not written the letters, it admitted at the same time that a scientific analysis might indeed reveal that he could have. Yet the only way to arrive at that conclusion depended upon the chemical and expert handwriting analysis that it had denied Guareschi. The last sentence appears both ironic and contradictory since justice might not in fact have been done.

A careful study of the Tribunal's reasoning reveals the considerations that swayed its opinion. We do well to read all seven in full as the Court listed them:

1. Essere mai pensabile che si invii una lettera che dovrà attraversare il fronte, firmando chiaramente tale lettera col proprio nome quando è notorio che nel periodo della Resistenza tutti si celavano, ai fini della sicurezza personale dietro nomi convenzionali?
2. Si legge nel "Candido" che le lettere furono affidate "ad un corriere che fu poi catturato dalle forze fasciste fuori dalle sacre mura"; quindi lo stesso 19 gennaio 1944 i fascisti vennero in possesso di tale documento. Può credersi che un documento di tale importanza, nel quale non si esitava a richiedere il bombardamento dell'acquedotto, con tutte le prevedibili conseguenze, non fosse dai fascisti portato subito, in mille modi, a conoscenza della popolazione romana per mettere, da una parte, in cattiva luce le forze della resistenza ed i suoi modi subdoli di lotta e tentare, dall'altra, di rialzare il loro traballante prestigio?
3. Nella lettera 19 gennaio 1944 si fa esplicito riferimento ad altra lettera datata 12 gennaio stesso anno, contenente le stesse richieste ed indirizzata alla stessa persona. De Gasperi, per ripetere tale richiesta, evidentemente turbato dal ritardo, (si tratta, si badi bene, di sette giorni soltanto e la lettera doveva essere recapitata oltre le linee) doveva avere molto a cuore quanto chiedeva ed allora, perché mai servirsi di un mezzo che si era dimostrato così insicuro quando nel Laterano era installata una radio trasmettente attraverso la quale più celermente e più sicuramente avrebbe potuto comunicare con le autorità alleate?
4. Nella lettera veniva esplicitamente chiesta un'azione di guerra; poteva essa azione venire sostanzialmente chiesta da un privato cittadino? È notorio che le forze della resistenza avevano una giunta militare che certamente avrebbe avuto più competenza a rivolgere una richiesta del genere.
5. Nella lettera inviata dal Generale Alexander è chiaramente detto che una richiesta del genere sarebbe stata presa in considerazione soltanto se fosse pervenuta agli Alleati tramite il Maresciallo Badoglio: se una convenzione esisteva è logico che i membri del C.L.N. ne fossero a conoscenza e quindi poteva mai pensare De Gasperi che la sua richiesta avesse sortito un esito?
6. Il teste Bonham Carter, al quale era indirizzata la lettera, ha esplicitamente escluso di essere stato applicato alla Peninsular Base Section di Salerno e soprattutto di conoscere il De Gasperi firmatario della lettera del quale sentì parlare soltanto dopo la totale liberazione del territorio nazionale. Né può pensarsi ad un errore di indirizzo, in quanto dal tenore della lettera appare chiaro che tra i due era già in atto uno scambio di corrispondenza; quindi il Carter ed il De Gasperi, sia pure per corrispondenza, dovevano ben conoscersi, cosa invece smentita da entrambi.
7. Inutilità di richiedere delle azioni di guerra che, purtroppo, venivano già regolarmente effettuate e che come dice il Gen. Alexander nella già ricordata lettera, erano

continuamente oggetto di lagnanze da parte della autorità italiane e Vaticane. Del resto risulta che lo acquedotto di Roma fin dal luglio 1943 aveva subito azioni di bombardamento.⁴⁷

Each point the court weighed surely influenced their opinion that the letters were false, especially the testimony of the British witnesses that it viewed as most reliable. But in the end, the points, taken separately or together as a whole, prove nothing.

As the venerable judge Giovanni Durando surmised in his 1994 memoir *Io No!*, just because it was not comprehensible that a person could send a letter with a signature bearing a name through the lines, we have no proof beyond a shadow of a doubt that De Gasperi did not write the letter. Just because it was unthinkable that the Fascists would not have immediately published the letters if they had captured them, we have no proof beyond a shadow of a doubt that De Gasperi did not write the letters. Just because De Gasperi had a radio transmitter at his disposal that he could have used to communicate with the Allies, we have no proof beyond a shadow of a doubt that De Gasperi did not write the letters—perhaps he chose to write the letters just the same. Just because it seemed highly unlikely that De Gasperi as a private citizen could have asked the Allies to bomb the aqueduct in Rome, we have no proof that he did not do so anyway. Just because the letters did not come from Badoglio and the Allies would not have considered them seriously, we cannot declare without doubt that De Gasperi did not write the letters. Just because Bonham Carter testified that he was not stationed at the Peninsular Base Section and did not know De Gasperi, we do not necessarily have proof that De Gasperi did not write them anyway — perhaps he had the wrong address or perhaps he mistook one Colonel Bonham Carter for another. Finally, just because, as Alexander testified in his letter, it would have been pointless to ask the Allies to bomb Rome since they were

attacking the city anyway, we have no proof that De Gasperi did not send a request just the same.

The Public Minister's explanation of why the Court denied scientific analysis provides even more proof that it treated Guareschi unjustly: 'Prima ancora che contro le prove, i due ignobili pezzi di carta si sono sgretolati contro il luminoso alibi morale dell'onorevole De Gasperi'.⁴⁸ This assertion, too, is noteworthy, for in a very intriguing way it mirrors what De Gasperi's wife Francesca had voiced prior to the beginning of the trial: 'Io non capisco perché debbano fare la perizia, quando mio marito ha affermato di non aver mai scritto quei documenti'.⁴⁹ In light of De Gasperi's moral alibi, why did the tribunal not consider Guareschi's moral alibi as well?

The actual punishment the court meted out obliged Guareschi to spend one year in prison and pay the fine of 100,000 lire along with the costs of the proceedings.⁵⁰ He also had to pay the symbolic sum of one lira to De Gasperi in reparation for the damage done to his reputation and to publish the sentence twice in *Candido*.⁵¹ The court also added eight months of prison time for the suspended sentence of the Einaudi affair. Upon hearing the outcome of the trial, several of Guareschi's detractors, including Eugenio Montale, toasted the court's decision and reveled in Guareschi's defeat.⁵²

Guareschi accepted the sentence but not the unfair process in his opinion that led to it. Thus, in an impassioned article, he explained to his readers that he would refuse to appeal:

No, niente Appello.
Qui non si tratta di riformare una sentenza ma un costume. La sentenza è regolare, ha il crisma della legalità. Il costume è sbagliato, e non è una questione che riguardi la Magistratura: è una questione di carattere generale, che riguarda l'Italia intera.

Non è un colpo di testa: io non ho il temperamento dell'aspirante eroe o dell'aspirante martire. [. . .]

In tutta questa faccenda hanno tenuto conto dell'*alibi morale* di De Gasperi e non si è neppure ammesso che io possegga un *alibi morale*.

Quarantacinque o quarantasei anni di vita pulita, di lavoro onesto, non sono un luminoso *alibi morale*?

Me l'hanno negato.

Hanno negato tutta la mia vita, tutto quello che io ho fatto nella mia vita.

Non si può accettare un sopruso di questo genere. [. . .]

Vado in prigione. Accetto la condanna come accetterei un pugno in faccia: non mi interessa dimostrare che m'è stato dato ingiustamente. Il pugno l'ho già preso e nessuno potrà far sì che io non l'abbia preso.

Non mi pesa la condanna in sé, ma il modo.

*E il modo ancor m'offende.*⁵³

He continued venting his frustration about the 'tribunale rivoluzionario' he had just faced. Then, he said he would gladly take up his old rucksack and enter prison: 'Niente di teatrale, niente di drammatico. Tutto semplice e naturale. Per rimanere liberi bisogna, a un bel momento, prendere senza esitare la via della prigione'.⁵⁴

Guareschi spent 409 days in Parma's San Francesco prison.⁵⁵ He spent another six months on probation, confined to his home in Roncole. When he had finally served all his time, he returned as editor of *Candido* and continued his vigorous political satire. From time to time, whenever the question of the authenticity of the letters resurfaced in the public sphere, Guareschi would restate his belief that the letters were authentic. He believed that the mass media condemned him mistakenly for having published false letters, and he did his best to discredit the charge.

III. Persistent Misinterpretations:

Misconstrued appraisals of Guareschi's sentence and refusal to appeal began immediately. The day after the trial, as Guareschi reported in *Candido*, the official newspaper of the Christian Democrats, *Il Popolo*, proclaimed in its broad head: 'Le lettere attribuite a De Gasperi sono false! Un anno di reclusione al diffamatore Guareschi'.⁵⁶ Over the years, journalists and historians have repeated this same claim. We have, for example, already seen what the official history of the Democrazia Cristiana reports. Other instances include the following taken from various publications:

La pubblicazione di alcune lettere, che si rivelarono essere false, in cui si accusava De Gasperi di aver invocato durante la Resistenza i bombardamenti angloamericani su Roma, fece scattare la denuncia e il processo contro lo stesso scrittore, condannato a un anno di carcere [. . .].⁵⁷

Si tratta di una causa per diffamazione intentata dal leader democristiano contro il direttore del «Candido» Giovanni Guareschi, reo di aver diffuso un documento del 1944, falso, in cui De Gasperi avrebbe chiesto agli Alleati di bombardare l'acquedotto di Roma [. . .].⁵⁸

Guareschi nel '54 pubblicò sul «Candido» una presunta lettera di De Gasperi che risaliva al gennaio del '44, e con la quale questi avrebbe invitato gli Alleati a bombardare Roma. L'aveva comprata da un trafficone, ma si trattava di un falso, come dichiarò il tribunale [. . .].⁵⁹

L'appunto sulle confidenze di «tale Patrizio» ricorda la vicenda di De Gasperi e delle false lettere pubblicate da Guareschi, quando si temeva che lo statista si candidasse al Quirinale, dopo la sconfitta del '55.⁶⁰

Apart from the mistaken belief that the letters had been declared false, other distortions surround Guareschi's decision not to seek an appeal.

Esteemed journalists Indro Montanelli and Enzo Biagi, for example, have both stated that, after he had served his time, Guareschi later admitted to them that he had made a mistake and wanted to atone for his error by serving out his sentence.⁶¹ Giulio Andreotti also suggested something similar. Writing in a letter to a lawyer, who in 1996 attempted to help Guareschi's children possibly have the sentence officially overturned, the senator stated: 'Uno dei miei collaboratori aveva ottime relazioni con Guareschi [. . .] Mi disse dopo aver parlato più volte con Giovannino di avere la certezza che il carattere fiero del personaggio lo avesse indotto a subire il carcere, pur essendosi convinto di essere stato tratto in inganno'.⁶² At a later time, Andreotti stated that for him, Bonham Carter's testimony was the decisive piece of evidence that influenced the court: 'La presenza come teste del Bonham Carter fu un elemento decisivo per smontare l'accusa. [. . .] Guareschi per quel che so era stato tratto in inganno, poi per fierezza non volle riconoscerlo'.⁶³

To his dying days, however, Guareschi continually hammered home the point that he still considered the letters to be authentic. For example, in 1959 a journalist reported that Guareschi was the person ‘che sposò la causa dei documenti falsi di Enrico De Toma’. Guareschi retorted: ‘Ciò è inesatto: io sposai la causa di due lettere autentiche a me affidate — perché ne disponessi gratuitamente come meglio credevo — dal De Toma. Non sposai la causa dei “documenti falsi” di Enrico De Toma’.⁶⁴ A few years earlier, he had answered the notion that he wanted to serve jail time in order to expiate his sins and undertake penance with these words: ‘Dopo il Referendum, salutando il mio Re che partiva per l’esilio, ho dichiarato che, pure non accettandola, mi impegnavo a subire la Repubblica così come, più avanti, pur non accettando una condanna da me ritenuta ingiusta, ho subito il carcere rifiutando sdegnosamente di appellarmi’.⁶⁵

IV. Conclusion:

Because so many distortions of *De Gasperi v. Guareschi* have crystallized in the collective imagination over the last fifty years, an informed scholarly community deserves to know the facts that the official proceedings detail. The Milan tribunal that convicted Giovannino Guareschi of libel counted heavily upon the British evidence provided by Bonham Carter and Alexander, and it also held De Gasperi’s moral alibi in highest regard. Common sense dictated that De Gasperi could never have written those letters. For many scholars, the same judgment still holds true today. De Gasperi’s accomplishments alone prove that he was certainly no thug, no common crook. On the contrary, in many respects by the time of the trial, he had already laid legitimate claim to be a true Italian political hero.

Indeed, scholars stand on solid ground in surmising that the letters Guareschi reproduced were forgeries even if they recognize that the judges, in many aspects,

conducted the trial unreasonably. Simply put, Guareschi's accusation was, and remains, too farfetched and scandalous to be plausible. The claim would find an analogy with an American journalist who accused Eisenhower of child molestation. The fact that Guareschi challenged Italy's greatest statesman on the grounds he presented indicates a disastrous failure of judgment.

Regardless of the claim, however, it is quite evident that the Court short-changed Guareschi and on three accounts did not give him full measure of proof to confute De Gasperi's counter allegation that the letters were forgeries. First, the judges refused to hear from six defense witnesses who were ready to bolster Guareschi's case. Second, they never discussed at length why the government had spent so much time seeking to recover documents if officials, as De Gasperi explained, had deemed them as bogus. Third, the judges did not allow the letters to be submitted for testing.

Admittedly, the Tribunal did face an almost impossible task — that of trying to determine definitively the paternity of a document through scientific analysis, an inexact operation that always leaves room for further confutation and debate. But in deciding not to undertake that endeavor, the Court capsized Guareschi's most essential line of defense and discarded his own moral alibi. As the proceedings document, Guareschi's assault upon the rectitude of Italy's most famous statesman seemed to threaten the stability of the State itself.⁶⁶ In the thick of the Cold War, the Christian Democrat Party, sustained by the United States and the Vatican, had become a political juggernaut. It had achieved a status that placed its leadership seemingly above reproach. Guareschi could never have gained the same admiration the judges held for De Gasperi.

To counter misreckoning about the case and acquire an accurate understanding of how Alcide De Gasperi sent Giovannino Guareschi to jail, we must attentively study the

court proceedings and evaluate them with Guareschi's own commentary upon the events. Guareschi opted for imprisonment and did not seek an appeal precisely because he recognized the court's failures laid forth above, not because he wanted to atone for any error. Until his untimely death in 1968, he continued to retain that the letters he had published were authentic, and even if a determination of their paternity would have been ultimately unattainable, the Court never definitively proved that the letters were false.

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¹ F. Malgeri, 'De Gasperi e l'età del centrismo 1948-1954' in *Storia della Democrazia Cristiana*, 2 vols (Rome, Cinque Lune, 1988), II, 218-19.

² G. Guareschi, 'Il Ta-pum del cecchino', *Candido*, 4, 24 January 1954, 20-21 (p. 21).

³ G. Guareschi, 'Ritrattino', *Candido*, 25, 19 June 1949, p. 4.

⁴ In one poster, a man stands alone in an election booth ready to vote, the curtains pulled. The caption reads: 'Dio ti vede, Stalin no'. In the other, the skeleton of an Italian prisoner of war left to die in Russia, entrapped behind barbed wire, points his bony finger to the Popular Front symbol of Garibaldi imposed over a star. The caption read: 'Mamma, votagli contro anche per me'. For an analysis of their importance, see A. Chiesa, *La satira politica in Italia*, (Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1990), p. 166.

⁵ *Ibid* p. 166.

⁶ G. Guareschi, 'Se a ciascun l'interno affanno. . .', *Candido*, 10, 11 March 1951, p. 1. In early 1952, he expressed his concerns in these terms: "Il 18 aprile, la gente aveva sfiducia nei comunisti e fiducia in De Gasperi. Oggi la sfiducia nei comunisti è la stessa, se non aumentata. E la fiducia in De Gasperi è, si ancora grande; ma la sfiducia negli uomini che lo attorniano aumenta: questo è il guaio. De Gasperi è un uomo che cammina con un sacco in spalla: dentro il sacco ci sono le fesserie che commettono i suoi. Bisogna stare attenti perché, se il sacco diventa troppo pesante, De Gasperi o mollerà il sacco, o finirà assieme a esso per le terre." See 'Il caso Vanoni', *Candido*, 6, 10 February 1952, p. 2.

⁷ G. Guareschi, 'Lettera a De Gasperi', *Candido*, 11, 16 March 1952, pp. 1-2.

⁸ G. Guareschi, 'Il Ta-pum del cecchino', *Candido*, 4, 24 January 1954, (20-21), p. 21. The name read as one word and reflected the original way De Gasperi would have spelled it.

⁹ *Ibid* p. 20.

¹⁰ *Ibid* p. 21.

¹¹ G. Mamarella, *L'Italia contemporanea*, (Bologna, Il Mulino, 1993), p. 192. See also P. Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia del dopoguerra a oggi*, translated by M. Flores and S. Pierini, (Turin, Einaudi, 1989), pp. 245-46.

¹² O. Del Buono, 'De Gasperi Bombardarolo e Guareschi finì in prigione', *La Stampa (Tuttolibri)*, 21 January 1995, p. 32.

¹³ E. Gianeri and A. Rauch, editors, *Cento anni di satira politica in Italia (1876-1976)*, (Florence, Guaraldi Editore, 1976), p. 38.

¹⁴ ANSA press release, 20 January 1954.

¹⁵ ANSA press release, 21 January 1954. To counter this charge, Guareschi made it very clear at the time of the trial that he had not purchase the letters, stating that 'il presunto documento non fu da me pagato un sol centesimo, né un sol centesimo mi venne chiesto'. See 'Il Ta-pum del cecchino', *Candido*, 4, 24 January 1954, p. 20.

¹⁶ G. Guareschi, *Chi sogna nuovi gerani*, edited by A. and C. Guareschi, (Milan, Rizzoli, 1993), p. 351.

¹⁷ G. Guareschi, 'Il Ta-pum del cecchino: Il colpo di grazia', *Candido*, 5, 31 January 1954, (2, 20-21), p. 20.

¹⁸ *Ibid* p. 21. Following these comments, Guareschi published a letter written by Angelo Rizzoli, the owner of *Candido*. Rizzoli wanted the general public to understand that he had not known of Guareschi's intentions to accuse De Gasperi, and he ordered Guareschi to reproduce his letter of censure. Effectively, Rizzoli sought to distance himself from Guareschi and any legal responsibility. In his letter, Angelo Rizzoli stated: 'Caro Guareschi, con vivo disappunto ho visto riprodotto in *Candido* un documento che un comunicato ANSA dichiara essere apocrifia. Debbo dolermi con Lei di avere proceduto a mia insaputa alla pubblicazione di tale documento e, a prescindere dalla veridicità, di non avermi consultato sulla opportunità della sua pubblicazione. In tale circostanza, e per la prima volta nella mia vita di editore, intendo ben scindere le mie dalla Sue responsabilità. La prego di rendere pubblica attraverso *Candido* questa mia lettera'. (Letter to Guareschi, 23 January 1954).

¹⁹ As O. Del Buono recounts in ‘Guareschi diventa candido nell’Italia del dopoguerra’: ‘Per l’esatezza, all’inizio, non parve troppo serio. Uno scherzo, una leggerezza più che altro [. . .] Comunque dato che ormai Giovannino Guareschi aveva quasi più nemici a destra che a sinistra, ci fu un vistoso sussulto della suscettibilità parlamentare [. . .].’ The case took place in 1951 when *Candido*’s assistant editor, Carletto Mosca published a cartoon depicting a series of two columns of wine bottles facing each other in military formation. Their labels read, ‘Nebiole — Poderi del Senatore Luigi Einaudi’. The bottles served as an honor guard for the small figure of Einaudi that Manzoni had sketched in the background. Guareschi published the vignette because he saw an egregious conflict of interest: Einaudi was promoting his business interests while using his political clout as President of the Republic. Two members of parliament, Giuseppe Bettiol and Paolo Treves, convinced the undersecretary of Justice, Egidio Tosato, to authorize proceedings against Guareschi and Manzoni for libel. Both were absolved at first, but upon appeal brought by the Procuratore Generale della Repubblica, they were found guilty and given a suspended sentence of eight months in jail. See *La Stampa (Tuttolibri)*, 14 January 1995, p. 36. Del Buono provides further information about the Nebiole affair in ‘“De Gasperi bombardarolo” e Guareschi finì in prigione’, *La Stampa (Tuttolibri)*, 21 January 1995, p. 32.

²⁰ E. De Toma, ‘I documenti di Mussolini’, *Meridiano d’Italia, Supplemento*, 2, 30 June 1954, pp. 1-39. See also the *Processo Verbale I* [Court Proceedings], p. 22.

²¹ G. Guareschi, ‘Il Ta-pum del cecchino’, 9, 28 February 1954, p. 2, pp. 20-21

²² As Guareschi explained: ‘Per comprendere l’importanza morale e giuridica di queste prove, basta ricordare che una perizia può decidere le sorti d’un processo e che la presenza della firma di un notaio può comportare addirittura l’obbligo legale di ritenere autentico il documento sul quale essa è apposta. Si aggiunga poi che una perizia può essere smentita solo da una controperizia riconosciuta dalla Magistratura e che la firma di un notaio può essere invalidata solo in base a un’esplicita sentenza del Tribunale, e si capirà che a favore delle due lettere esisteva quella che in linguaggio giuridico si chiama «presunzione di autenticità». Guareschi, insomma, non aveva solo la certezza di aver fatto tutto il possibile per controllare e vagliare i due documenti: aveva il dovere di ritenerli autentici fino a prova contraria ossia fino a quando qualcuno avesse dimostrato, con mezzi legalmente validi, che la perizia del prof. Focaccia fosse sbagliata o che la firma del notaio svizzero Stamm fosse falsa’. See ‘Dove sono gli originali delle lettere?’, *Candido*, 9, 26 February 1956, p. 6.

²³ *Processo Verbale di Dibattimento I*, pp. 1-13. All further references are abbreviated to *PVD I*.

²⁴ *Ibid* p. 14.

²⁵ *Ibid* p. 15.

²⁶ Over the span of five years, a series of expert analyses, conducted by the State and on behalf of De Toma’s attorneys, finally proved inconclusive. In 1958 a court absolved De Toma for the trafficking of false documents and ordered the originals of the letters destroyed. Thus, no way today exists to prove definitively that the letters were authentic or forgeries.

²⁷ *PVD I*, pp. 19-20.

²⁸ *Ibid* p. 20-21. Guareschi’s own typed commentary that he read aloud at the trial states: ‘Io pubblicai quelle due lettere scritte dal signor De Gasperi con la ragionata certezza della loro autenticità. E sulla certezza assoluta della loro autenticità io ho basato il mio commento, commento che il querelante definisce diffamatorio, ma che è semplicemente adeguato alla gravità del documento riprodotto sul giornale da me diretto e di cui sono responsabile’. See *Memoria difensiva*, 1954.

²⁹ During his interrogation, the court asked Guareschi what specific letters De Toma had shown him that were written by De Gasperi. He replied that he had seen only the two in question, and not a third to which the letter of 19 January 1944 alludes: ‘Della lettera 12 gennaio ne sono venuto a conoscenza in seguito ad una pubblicazione fatta dal Corriere della Sera, ma non l’ho mai vista. See *PVD I*, p. 23. This is an important point because confusion exists over what letters Guareschi actually published.

³⁰ *PVD I*, pp. 25-26.

³¹ *Ibid* p. 27.

³² As historian Mark Clark has observed, even thirty years after the war, government officials had laid down laws which forbade citizens from criticizing the values of the Resistance. See *Modern Italy, 1871-1995*, second edition, (London and New York, Longmans, 1996), p. 316.

³³ *PVD I*, p. 29.

³⁴ H. Alexander, typewritten letter to ‘Signor De Gasperi’, 23 February 1954.

³⁵ *Processo Verbale di Dibattimento II*, 14 April 1954, p. 4. All further references are abbreviated to *PVD II*.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 5. Interestingly, in the weeks leading up to the proceedings, Guareschi had pondered in *Candido* why such agents, even if acting on their own initiative, had sought documents that De Gasperi had always claimed to be false. See 'Il Ta-pum del cecchino: Aria greve', *Candido*, 7, 14 February 1954, pp. 2, 20.

³⁷ *Ibid* pp. 6-8.

³⁸ *Ibid* p. 10.

³⁹ *Ibid* p. 12.

⁴⁰ *Ibid* p. 15.

⁴¹ G. Zucconi, 'Guareschi inchiodato alle sue responsabilità', *Il Popolo*, 15 April 1954, p. 2.

⁴² G. Guareschi, 'Il Ta-pum del cecchino: No, niente appello!', *Candido*, 17, 25 April 1954, (16-23) p. 22.

⁴³ Important works on the life of Alcide De Gasperi and his leadership of Italy during the reconstruction and early economic recovery years include: G. Baget-Bozzo, *Il partito cristiano al potere*, (Florence, Valecchi, 1974); C. Danè and G. Allara, editors, *De Gasperi in parlamento 1921-1954* (Rome, Cinque Lune, 1990); A. Canavaro, *Alcide De Gasperi* (Milan, Centro Ambrosiano, 1997); M. Innocenti, *L'Italia del 1948* (Milan, Mursia, 1997); and G. Andreotti, *De Gasperi: Visto da vicino* (Milan, Rizzoli, 1986). For a more intimate and familial portrait, see M. Romana De Gasperi's two works, *De Gasperi, Uomo solo* (Milan, Mondadori, 1964) and *Mio caro padre* (Brescia, Morcelliana, 1979).

⁴⁴ *PVD II*, pp. 18-19.

⁴⁵ G. Guareschi, 'Il Ta-pum del cecchino: No, niente appello!', p. 22. In 1998, Judge Antonio Di Pietro, who had been the primary investigator of the *Mani Pulite* [Clean Hands] inquiry that came to topple Italy's corrupt political system in the early 1990s, reflected on Guareschi's decision and commented that, more than a great Italian writer and father of Don Camillo and Peppone, Guareschi should be remembered because 'è stato soprattutto un esempio di rettitudine morale, indipendentemente dall'ideologia di appartenenza. [. . .] De Gasperi lo querelò. Ne scaturì un processo in cui, però, nonostante le formali assicurazioni, non fu ammessa la perizia grafica sulle lettere in possesso di Guareschi. Esse vennero considerate false sulla base della parola di De Gasperi. [. . .] Guareschi fu condannato a un anno di reclusione. Per protesta verso una decisione che considerava ingiusta non scese in piazza a manifestare contro i magistrati, come qualcun altro ama fare ora, ma addirittura rinunciò a proporre appello e si avviò in carcere pur di rimanere coerente con se stesso'. See 'Chi fa cortei contro i giudici impari dal grande Guareschi', *Oggi* 28 July 1998, p. 42.

⁴⁶ *Processo Verbale di Dibattimento III*, 15 April 1954, pp. 42-43. All further references are abbreviated to *PVD III*.

⁴⁷ *Ibid* pp. 38-42.

⁴⁸ G. Guareschi, 'Il Ta-pum del cecchino: No, niente appello!', p. 23.

⁴⁹ *Ibid* p. 22.

⁵⁰ The estimated value of the fine today would be worth around 4,000 Euro or approximately 6,000 US dollars.

⁵¹ *PVD III*, p. 51.

⁵² A. Gnocchi, *Giovannino Guareschi: Una storia italiana*, (Milano, Rizzoli, 1998), p. 238.

⁵³ G. Guareschi, 'No, niente appello!', p. 16.

⁵⁴ *Ibid* p. 16. Guareschi crafted a Don Camillo tale, 'Il cero' to vent his frustration. Alcibiade, a landowner, sues his renter Bazzigà for having fabricated a letter with Aliciabe's signature that invalidated his contract. Alcibiade had in reality signed the letter but later thought it best not to get out of the contract. The court decides in favor of Alcibiade who then triumphantly returns to town and brings a candle to Don Camillo, inviting him to light it on the altar in front of the Madonna. Don Camillo lights the candle. It flickers and then goes out. He whittles the wax and tries once more, but again the light falters. He brings the candle to the rectory, lights it, and sure enough, the candle burns brightly. As soon as he brings it to the altar in front of the Blessed Mother, the candlelight continues no more. Don Camillo begins to think that something diabolical is at work. He takes the candle, leaves the chapel and walks along the bank of a canal. Just as he stops to toss the candle in the water, it squirts from his hand and slithers away into the darkness: "'Meno male che non mi ha morsicato"' sussurra don Camillo che ormai non capisce più niente'. See *Candido*, 17, 25 April 1954, pp. 10-11.

⁵⁵ According to V. Zincone, at the time Guareschi entered prison, he became the only Italian journalist since the founding of the nation to have ever served actual jail time for libel. See 'Giovannino va in galera', *Il Resto del Carlino*, 6 May 1954, p. 2.

⁵⁶ *Il Popolo*, 'Le lettere attribuite a De Gasperi sono false! Un anno di reclusione al diffamatore Guareschi', p. 1.

⁵⁷ S. Franchi, *'Tango' e il PCI*, (Catanzaro, Rubettino Editore, 2000), p. 33.

⁵⁸ P. Battista, 'Giovannino fece errore', *La Stampa*, 8 February 1992, p. 29.

⁵⁹ R.C., 'Fu giusta la condanna di Guareschi?', *L'Eco di Bergamo*, 20 December 2000, p. 47.

⁶⁰ G. Nuzzi, 'Andreotti, ora è giallo sulla lettera di Violante', *Il Giornale*, 18 January 2003, p. 3.

⁶¹ I. Montanelli, 'La stanza di Montanelli', *Corriere della Sera*, 29 April 1998, p. 43. See also E. Biagi, *Mille camere*, (Milan, Mondadori, 1984), p. 31.

⁶² G. Andreotti, Letter to Ubaldo Giuliani-Balestrino, No date, p. 7.

⁶³ G. Andreotti, Letter to Author, 2 July 2003, No page.

⁶⁴ G. Guareschi, 'Rispetta almen le ceneri!', *Candido*, 3, 18 January 1959, p. 12.

⁶⁵ G. Guareschi, '25,000 trinariciuti bianchi', *Candido*, 24, 15 June 1958, p. 8. A year before he had stated: 'quella stampa governativa [. . .] si arrabattò per cambiare le carte in tavola presentando una condanna per diffamazione a mezzo stampa come una condanna per pubblicazione di documento falso. [. . .] le lettere ispiratrici di quel commento che mi fruttò ospitalità al San Francesco esistevano, erano autentiche e ne possedevo io stesso gli originali'. See 'Lettera al puerpero', *Candido*, 32, 11 August 1957, p. 2.

⁶⁶ Andreotti, in a letter to Carlotta and Alberto Guareschi dated 8 May 1996, predictably sustained that the tribunal was not swayed by the political climate of the times: 'non credo che il clima politico del 1954 fosse tale da negar giustizia ad un giornalista notissimo di cui era stata esemplare la fierezza nel campo di prigionia'. One of De Gasperi's close friends, however, admits that the political climate did have a role. In 1993 Flaminio Piccoli in said: 'Che il clima politico di quegli anni aver influito sui giudici non lo nego. L'impressione era che si volesse infangare una pagina di storia. Se poi i giudici si siano fatti influenzare troppo da quel clima, lo sanno loro ed è cosa che riguarda la loro coscienza'. See F. Lo Sardo, 'Lo zampino del santo', *Il Sabato*, 23 August 1993, 26-27 (p.27). For further consideration of political ramifications surrounding the trial, I recommend P. Tritto, *Il destino di Giovannino Guareschi* (Matera, Altre Muse Editrice, 2003).