

Franco Freda and Nazi-Maoism

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Following Italy's capitulation in World War II, the nation was plunged into a period of profound political turmoil and upheaval. This era was marked by widespread political violence, suppression, and instability, notably with the rise of the Italian Social Movement (ISM) in 1946. Comprising staunch Mussolini supporters and Fascist enthusiasts, the ISM sought to oppose the fledgling democratic government of Italy, which found itself vulnerable to disruptions from various extremist groups in the aftermath of the war. The geopolitical landscape, characterized by the juxtaposition of Soviet-influenced states to the east and American-led democracies to the west, exacerbated anti-American and anti-Soviet sentiments within Italy, particularly among those who lamented the Fascist regime's downfall at the hands of these powers.

In this environment of political flux and discord, Franco Freda emerged as a pivotal figure within the post-war Italian Fascist movement. Diverging from the conventional anti-Communist Fascist narrative, Freda adopted a more radical stance, which led to his classification as a "Nazi-Maoist." His ideological stance was eclectic, drawing from a diverse array of influences including communists like Mao Zedong, Amadeo Bordiga, Third Position theorists like Adolf Hitler, Giovanni Gentile, the traditionalist philosopher Julius Evola, Plato and Nietzsche. While such ideological amalgamation might draw skepticism at first glance, a deeper exploration into the context of Italy's political climate at the time underscores the relevance and coherence of Freda's views.

The ISM attracted a melange of radical elements from Italy's post-war society, primarily fascists, their sympathizers, and certain conservative factions, united by a common apprehension of a communist takeover in the wake of the new government's establishment. This fear led to financial backing from affluent landowners, the bourgeoisie, and even the United States. Nonetheless, the Fascists' inherent disdain for the liberal democratic framework resulted in their marginalization from significant segments of Italian political life, a fate they shared with communist groups. Despite experiencing moments of popularity, post-war neo-fascist entities were constantly beleaguered by internal strife. Radical segments within these groups aimed to overturn the Italian social order in favor of a revolutionary Fascist society. In contrast, the more moderate elements within the ISM leaned towards a pro-American, pro-NATO orientation, even contemplating alliances with monarchists and Christian Democrats. This ideological rift led to the ousting of Giorgio Almirante, the original party leader, due to his staunch anti-NATO position, and his replacement with Arturo Michelini.

Michelini steered the ISM towards a more conservative and moderate path, alienating numerous party members. This era coincided with the tumultuous "Years of Lead," characterized by extreme political unrest and violence across Italy. The ISM fragmented under the pressures of its moderation, yet Freda saw conventional electoral politics as merely perpetuating the established system's inefficacies, akin to a hamster on a wheel. He believed that all youth movements and political parties were inevitably trapped within the bourgeois framework, tainted by the allure of democracy.

“We are against political parties. Of the current political parties, only twilight political positions appear, which can build the pillars for the success of oligarchic groups, foreign to our general way of being. We are antidemocratic: above the fetishes of Capitalist and Bolshevik democracy relapses the responsibility of the fall of political values and the moral trauma which has disintegrated individuals, putting them apart from the organic life of the State.”

— Franco Freda, Manifesto of The Gruppo Di Ar

In Italy, the transition away from classical populist Italian Fascism paved the way for the emergence of terrorist factions from both the communist and fascist spectrums. Notably, the National Vanguard and the Armed Revolutionary Nucleus stood out, along with a variety of smaller collectives and street-level organizations dedicated to opposing communist militants within the country. Concurrently, communist factions like Prima Linea engaged in terrorist activities targeting the Italian government, often leading to violent confrontations with neo-fascist groups on the streets.

Amidst this backdrop of turmoil, stemming from the terrorist actions of both communist and neo-fascist factions, neither group managed to sufficiently undermine the liberal bourgeois framework to establish dominance of their ideologies over the Italian state. Within this chaotic environment, Franco Freda emerged as a key figure in the Italian neo-fascist landscape, notably through his publication of *The Disintegration of The System* in 1969. This period marked the initial phase of what would be a prolonged era of conflict. Freda's book laid out his vision for the course that Italian Fascists should adopt amidst this strife, alongside his broader political theories. *The Disintegration of The System* not only reflects Freda's political ideology and his wide-ranging worldview but also underscores his stance on fascist activism, offering a glimpse into his approach to political engagement during a time of intense societal conflict.

“At present, in the coalition of men that we cannot create, but that we can only recognize and strengthen we have have chosen to struggle in this the world of bourgeois democracies, to these men

that refuse as foreign to their style an equivocal function of intellectual “devotion” for us, we must propose to these men a definitive objective of struggle: the destruction of the bourgeois world. That is to say we must convince them that they are poorly represented by incurably bourgeois society: that no therapy is possible, that henceforth a surgical operation would not even be effective, that it is necessary to accelerate the hemorrhaging and bury the corpse. We must persuade them that, nothing we can construct wouldn't go to ruins; that the fundamental premise to construct the true state is the demolition of the residual forms and surviving structures of the bourgeois regimes.”

— Franco Freda, *The Disintegration of The System*

Freda was unwavering in his conviction that the dismantling of the existing liberal bourgeois framework should be the paramount aim of the fascist movement. He contended that this societal structure, which was entrenched in Italy by the triumphant Americans post-World War II, epitomized the subjugation of the Italian populace. To realize this ambition, Freda proposed a tactical approach dubbed the "Strategy of Tension." This approach entailed fascist operatives infiltrating communist factions with the intention of provoking them into executing acts of terrorism. As an alternative tactic, fascist entities, such as Freda's own New Order, would orchestrate terrorist activities themselves but manipulate the evidence to implicate the communists as the perpetrators. A significant instance of such terrorism was the assassination of the Italian Prime Minister, an act attributed to the Red Brigade, underscoring the severe and tragic consequences of these strategies.

On the Red Brigade's terrorism

Freda's beliefs were deeply rooted in the concept of accelerationism, where he stressed the necessity of overthrowing the existing political structure by all available means. In his writings, he often used the word "accelerate" (*accelerare*) to highlight the critical need for adopting violent measures to hasten the collapse of the government, create disorder, and trigger widespread societal unrest. These ideas were fundamental to his advocated "Strategy of Tension."

“The fact remains that, for a political soldier, purity justifies any hardness, indifference any deceit, while the stamp of the impersonal on the fight dissolves all moral worries, It is necessary by promoting, goading, accelerating the time of this destruction, intensifying the action of rupture from the present equilibrium and today's phase of political arrangement.”

— Franco Freda, *The Disintegration of The System*

Freda firmly believed that terrorist attacks were the most effective method to bring about the disintegration of the existing system, leading to a state of lawlessness and chaos in Italy. According to his perspective, only through such chaos could an opportunity arise for a Fascist coup, which would rely on popular support to overthrow the weakened liberal government and combat the communist forces. Freda advocated for the use of any means necessary to achieve this objective and dismantle the "bourgeois state." Interestingly, Freda's strategy has many similarities with James Mason's book *Siege*. From Freda's viewpoint, America's primary role was to exploit the resources and livelihoods of the Italian state and its people. He went so far as to argue that America was responsible for what he perceived as the "Judaization" of Europe.

"We have nothing to do with Illuminist Europe. We have nothing to see with the mercantile Europe, with the Europe of plutocratic colonialism: nothing to share. We only have accounts to settle with the Jewish or Judaized Europe."

"I dare say: too many – factors that have altered and corrupted this European liquid to the point of making it manure, it can still positively undergo processes of separation. Europe is an old hussy who has whored in all the brothels and has contracted all the ideological infections – since those of revolts of medieval communes to those of anti-imperial national monarchies; from Illuminism to Jacobinism, to Masonry, to Judaism, to Zionism, to liberalism, to Marxism. A whore, whose womb has conceived and engendered the bourgeois revolution and the proletarian revolt: whose soul was possessed by the violence of merchants and the rebellion of slaves."

— Franco Freda, *The Disintegration of The System*

Hence, Freda advocated for the total overthrow of the bourgeois order, which entailed dismantling the capitalist mode of production. He put forward several proposals, including the formation of agricultural combines and the elimination of both small and large landowners. These ideas bore a striking resemblance to the Soviet Union's policy of land collectivization.

“In the domain of agricultural production, the dissolution of small and large landowners existing today, will be succeeded by the organic constitution of AGRICULTURAL COMBINES, territorially differentiated according to the requirements of production. The workers of the soil will constitute THE COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT OF THE COMBINE. This enterprise will name the COMMISSAR OF THE COMBINE, with analogous functions, to those of the commissar of the enterprise.

In the field left free by that, which is today is defined as the “activity of commerce,” CENTERS OF CONSUMPTION will be formed, territorially articulated in the fashion of representing a link between each industrial and agricultural unit and the beneficiaries of these consumer products. The functioning of this organ will be made possible by the application of criteria analogous to those indicated for the structure of the industrial enterprise in the agricultural combine.”

— Franco Freda, The Disintegration of The System

In addition to advocating for land collectivization, Freda naturally also called for the total elimination of private property.

“For the organization of the popular state, the elimination of private property under all its forms will be necessary, the sole exceptions being represented by individual consumable goods. Property should only be public and the particular goods will become part of the patrimony of the state. In the domain of industrial production, the extinction of particular private enterprises will be followed by the appearance of concentration of enterprises, differentiated on the territorial level according to the objectives of production. In each enterprise the COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT will function, formed by all the workers of the enterprise. The committee of management will periodically name the COMMISSAR OF THE ENTERPRISE with the function (duties and powers) of coordinating all activity of the enterprise. The Commissar of the Enterprise will be responsible for his acts before the Regional Committee of Management and Organization (the regional presidium).”

“Material wealth- all material wealth – must be property of the state because it serves the state in its moment of organization; because the state must be unbound from these preoccupations, it is necessary to guarantee it space free from these prevarications that the retention of wealth in the hands of an oligarchical group with economic power inevitably causes.”

— Franco Freda, The Disintegration of The System

Freda's vehement critique of bourgeois norms and the institution of private property earned him the designation of a "Nazi-Maoist," distinguishing him from more traditional Fascists who often favored protecting middle-class property interests. He was a proponent of collective punishment, advocating for forced labor as a standard penalty for a wide range of crimes, with only the most egregious offenses, such as anti-fascism, treason, espionage, terrorism, sabotage, murder, and significant theft of state assets by officials, meriting the death penalty. This approach to justice, involving correctional labor through prisons and labor camps, bore a striking resemblance to the Gulag system employed in the Soviet Union, reflecting a punitive philosophy that closely mirrored the harsh penal measures of the Soviet criminal justice system.

Freda's vision for a Popular State as an alternative to the traditional Bourgeois State was influenced by a diverse range of sources, including the philosophical ideals of Plato's Republic, the radical thoughts of Evola, and the practices of Maoist China, coining it as Aristocratic Communism. This notion blended the aristocratic governance of Plato, emphasizing rule by philosopher-kings, with the Marxist goal of a proletarian dictatorship. In this framework, the party played a pivotal role, acting as the people's administrators and advocates, with leadership expected to be adept in strategizing and executing plans that resonate with the people's needs. Drawing inspiration from Amadeo Bordiga, Freda emphasized the importance of leadership as a conduit for collective wisdom and action, rooted in class consciousness and grassroots engagement. This approach mirrored Mao Zedong's Mass Line strategy, advocating for party members to deeply engage with societal issues and derive insights from the populace to craft effective policies. Such party members, envisioned as modern-day philosopher-rulers, were tasked with combining wisdom and public service, paralleling the governance ideals in Plato's Republic.

For Freda, achieving the vision of Evola's Imperium necessitated the adoption of Aristocratic Communism, a means to foster a society marked by traditional hierarchies and values. Freda proposed the establishment of a popular militia, an alternative to traditional law enforcement and military bodies, comprised of individuals selected for their moral and spiritual qualities. This militia was envisioned to uphold social order, counter bourgeois influences, defend the state, and actively participate in the fight against capitalism. Through this, Freda sought to realize a harmonious social order, continuously evolving in the face of capitalist and imperialist challenges, by integrating practical experience with ideological principles to balance diverse societal forces.

Nazi-Maoist propaganda poster. The background shows both Evola and Mao, with Freda in the middle

“The Popular Youth Militia will be assigned vigilance and prevention functions in the interior against the resurgence of bourgeois tendencies. Looking abroad, it will collaborate with the defense of the Popular State and with the struggle of national-anti-capitalist movements.”

— Franco Freda, *The Disintegration of The System*

Radicalized youth would assume leadership in the revolution, mirroring the role of Mao's Red Guards. This, however, necessitated the perpetuation of a cultural revolution, demanding the continual elimination of bourgeois elements.

“The real State is valid as an ordering principle of a Reconquista that man must make: the Reconquista of the overworld, the reestablishment of its heroic dimension.”

“The worst evil in Italy, it’s still the bourgeois: the bourgeois-priest, the bourgeois-peasant, the bourgeois-worker, the bourgeois- “mister”, the bourgeois-intellectual: almost sawdust, the substance without form, in which we can distinguish neither high nor low.”

— Franco Freda, *The Disintegration of The System*

In 1968, inspired by Freda's call for a "Revolutionary War," a movement known as the Struggle of The People took shape, drawing its core membership from the student body of Sapienza University of Rome. This group passionately pursued the vision of a "Revolutionary War" aimed at creating a fascist dictatorship of the proletariat, leveraging Maoist guerrilla tactics to topple the existing government and undermine the bourgeoisie. This ambition seamlessly transitions into Freda's broader views on the nature of the State. Unlike the conventional concept of the state as a mere administrative apparatus, Freda saw it as an organic entity, a living system where various components collaborate under the Mass Line to achieve communal objectives. This perspective, often associated with fascist thought, suggests a State where harmony and concerted action drive the pursuit of collective aspirations, illustrating a deep ideological commitment to unity and purposeful governance.

As Freda put it:

“We do not search for the state on the basis of empirical inquiry leading to the phenomena of the state existing today; we will attempt to seize the state not as a historical phenomenon but as the State from a “phenomenological” logical point of view, but we wish to understand it in the absolute: as a value, that is to say, as reality that holds true pro aeternitate. A reality that, considering in itself, has no need of manifestation, historical support (the existing state) to be valuable. In other terms, we want to seize the essence of the idea of the state that illuminates, judging these phenomena (the historical state) are better or worse applications in relation to this canon.

Taking what we have said higher, our myth of the state is not held to be a utopia, if by utopia we mean, in effect, that which cannot be realized or exist, the fruit of overly cerebral and intellectual conception. The myth of the state is the myth of a political order that without lowering itself to any particular time and space “is” eternal, and eternally proposed as true.

The principles of the true state, by recovering the domain of “should be”, assume eminent and normative character and, as such, are not verified by recognition or agreement, by the decided refusal of those who live in the historical world. They issue from a metapolitical and metahistorical level consequently autonomous in relation to the forms of empirical political existence: it is on the contrary that these forms which, in order not to become abstractions, are “forms of something “real,” and should exist by function of these principles... The true state does not constitute a simple structure of positive rights, but is an essence and in function superior: the spirit of the state, the center of the state is represented by power that transcends the plan and that is immediately earthly and simply human.”

— Franco Freda, *The Disintegration of The System*

Freda’s view of the State is both idealistic and totalitarian, echoing the thoughts of Italian Fascist Giovanni Gentile, who regarded the State as the birthplace of civilization and a necessary historical evolution, embodying the whole of society. This perspective sharply contrasts with the Marxist view, which sees the state as an instrument of class conflict within the framework of historical materialism. Freda's vision of the State as an organic entity shares similarities with syndicalist ideas, envisioning a society segmented into various roles and functions that converge under a unified governing body, motivated by collective needs and goals. His objective was to cultivate a new archetype of personhood, a heroic counterpart to the bourgeois state's consumer-driven and submissive populace. While Freda did not consider himself a Marxist, he acknowledged an appreciation for certain aspects of “communist” states and guerrilla movements, demonstrating a nuanced stance that blended elements of different ideologies.

“Where the warrior people of North Vietnam, with a Spartan, sober, heroic style are far closer to our conception of existence than the Italian digestif, or the French or German of the West; where the Palestinian terrorist is far closer to our dreams of vengeance than the Jewish or Judaized Englishman”

—Franco Freda, *The Disintegration of The System*

Evola's strong views on the warrior ethos and the importance of inner spiritual struggle, as detailed in *Revolt Against The Modern World*, resonated deeply with Freda. This is why Freda championed a form of paganism that honored ancient European traditions and values. He engaged with anti-Christian polemics, promoted Nietzsche's philosophic works, and he denounced Christianity for its universalism and egalitarianism. This demonstrates a direct influence from Evola's advocacy for a profound intellectual and spiritual break from Christian norms. In this context, Freda's correspondence with Savitri Devi and his significant role in disseminating Esoteric Hitlerism through the publication of *Gold In The Furnace* adds additional layers to this. His work went beyond mere collaboration with Devi, extending into a broader engagement with and promotion of pagan perspectives, as seen in his series *Paganitas*. By considering Savitri Devi a "missionary of Aryan paganism," Freda not only underscored her impact on his religious views but also positioned himself within a larger ideological and spiritual struggle that sought to revive and valorize a pagan ethos against the backdrop of a modern world perceived as spiritually bankrupt, a quest for a spiritual reawakening grounded in the traditions of Europe's past.

It's significant to note that Freda enjoyed support from the Italian secret services, a connection facilitated through Masonic lodges in Italy. Additionally, members of his organization, New Order, engaged with the CIA as part of Operation Gladio. Among Freda's associates, Stefano Delle Chiaie notably supported causes aligned with U.S. interests worldwide, including backing pro-NATO regimes such as Pinochet's in Chile. Another member, Alessandro Alibrandi, took part in the Lebanese civil war, aligning with the pro-American-Israeli Lebanese Phalange Militia and even receiving treatment in an Israeli hospital. While direct evidence of Freda's awareness of these collaborations is lacking, their existence is crucial to highlight. Beyond these connections, Freda also received logistical support from Maoist China and financial backing from Muammar Gaddafi, adding layers of complexity to the web of his affiliations.

Freda's activities led to his incarceration for several years, including for his involvement in bombings that occurred in April 1969. In 1971, he was mistakenly charged with terrorist attacks on the National Bank of Agriculture's offices, embarking on a lengthy legal defense that spanned 16 years before he was eventually cleared of these charges. In 1982, Freda was sentenced to fifteen years in prison due to his ties with Fascist groups. Initially, in 1987, Freda was acquitted of any involvement in the Piazza Fontana

bombing in Milan, a devastating 1969 terrorist attack that killed 17 people and injured 88. However, further investigations over the years led to a 2004 court decision that found him primarily accountable for numerous terrorist activities perpetrated by Fascist factions during the so-called Years of Lead, although he could not be retried for these crimes due to his earlier acquittal.

In the year 2000, Freda, along with fellow adherents of the Fascist ideology, faced legal repercussions for their efforts to reestablish the defunct National Front party. This initiative, aimed at reviving the Fascist party originally led by Mussolini in Italy, contravened Italian law, resulting in a three-year incarceration for Freda. Despite these controversies surrounding his past, Freda has remained an active participant in Italy's political scene. Throughout the 2010s, he openly articulated his political stances, notably manifesting his support for Vladimir Putin. This endorsement of Putin was especially emphatic in October 2014, coinciding with the Azov Battalion's intense confrontations against forces led by Russia in eastern Ukraine.

“Putin is a champion of the white race, I think of the Slavic peoples, they’re the ones who won the Second World War, they’re brutal individuals, of course, but they are the only ones who can resist.”

“It is my impression that the only decent European politician is Vladimir Putin.”

— Franco Freda quoted in *Ukraine’s Far Right Is Boosting A Pro-Putin Fascist* by Michael Colborne

In December 2019, the Plomin' (Flame) Ukrainian literary club, associated with the Azov Battalion's intellectual wing, hosted an event featuring Freda that captured the interest of young neo-Nazi enthusiasts in Kyiv, keen on disseminating his ideologies throughout Ukraine. As a result, Freda's pivotal book, *The Disintegration of The System*, was translated into Ukrainian and disseminated by Plomin'. Notably, Freda's support for the Kremlin's position in the Russia-Ukraine conflict did not dissuade Ukrainian neo-Nazis from adopting his works, leading to their translation. The Ukrainian edition was even introduced at the esteemed Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, a institution highly regarded by Ukrainian nationalists across the spectrum. Despite attempts by the university administration to prevent the event, activists managed to carry it out in a classroom within the academy's museum, drawing an audience of about 40 people and sparking substantial debate both within the academic community and beyond.

Freda has not hesitated to voice his support for Russia amidst its ongoing conflict with Ukraine, articulating a clear stance against the influence and dominance of Anglo-American powers in global politics. This perspective aligns with a broader ideological framework that critiques Western hegemony. Complementing Freda's viewpoint, his associate, Omar Amine — formerly recognized by the name Claudio Mutti — shares a similar ideological orientation that favors pro-Russian sentiments while opposing Western geopolitical strategies and cultural influences. Amine's ideological commitments are further evidenced by his active engagement in dialogues with Alexander Dugin, a prominent Russian philosopher known for his advocacy of Eurasianism and his critical stance on Western liberalism. Additionally, Amine has successfully established meaningful relationships with the Chinese government, indicating a strategic alignment with powers that challenge the prevailing Western-centric global order. This network of relationships, shows the concerted effort to promote a multipolar world vision, challenging the unilateral dominance of Western Atlanticism.