

Box 12

Zorzi's Venetian Attack On Renaissance Science

Were Francesco Zorzi (a.k.a. Giorgi) alive today, he might be described (as some Republicans have recently described their party's Vice President) as "a nefarious bastard." Zorzi, unfortunately, did have parents. He came from a very old family that was among the top ten ruling families in Venice. Zorzi's political role and his method of thinking should be seen from the standpoint of the historic significance of the institutions he represented. He was a top-level Venetian spy (sometimes recognized as a Franciscan friar) at a time when Venice was reacting against the potential unleashed by newly created sovereign nation-states. This reaction was directed, in large degree, against the political and scientific leadership of Nicholas of Cusa (whose ideas sparked the pro-nation-state Italian Renaissance). Zorzi was relied upon for the most serious matters of state, based on his personal bloodline. Much of the oligarchical wealth of Venice (then, history's greatest financial center) was piled high, through usury, in the course of its role as a promoter of religious war during the Crusades. They built up the precedent for what some wild-eyed nuts today promote as "globalization." The "Venetian Model" was the modern origin of much of today's anti-Franklin Roosevelt tendencies, such as: the hoarding of raw materials, currency speculation, outsourcing, and slave labor, as well as pre-emptive war against those who would disturb the Venetian "marketplace."

Just as the anti-nation-state forces in Britain and related U.S. networks moved

successfully after World War II to destroy the pro-"General Welfare" legacy of Franklin Roosevelt before they could continue their policy of genocidal looting of the planet, so did Venetian interests move rapidly against Cusa's influence and legacy before they could continue their accustomed status as the dominant financial-imperial force in the world.

So, ironically, Zorzi, as a personality, can only be truthfully defined "negatively," not simply from the standpoint of the evil he represented in-and-of-himself, but from the standpoint of his role as a Venetian agent against the modern nation-state and Cusa's legacy. As the driving force behind the famous Council of Florence (1438-40), Nicholas of Cusa led the way toward reconciliation within a Church split between East and West. Cusa would later organize for a dialogue among religions, to stop the insane Venetian-led plunge of the world toward religious conflict. He introduced, as the basis for statecraft, the idea that man is in the image of the Creator, and is therefore, capable of participating in the ongoing development of Creation.

This Renaissance idea was not only the basis for the spirit that presided over that Council of Florence itself, but was an outreaching commitment to bring this lofty concept rapidly into the realm of politics. For the first time, the New Testament, and ancient Greek, idea of *agapē* became the basis for government. The two successive examples of this are, first, Louis XI's France and, second,

Henry VII's England. This produced the virtually immediate transformation of the physical terrain within those new nations, and more importantly, unleashed the creative potential of the individuals within those territories. The explosive growth of these nations was a revolution which overturned what Venice saw as its personal "strategic chessboard."

This never-before-seen capability for wealth-production, was not something that could simply be bought and sold with Venetian coins. More and more geniuses began to appear out of the environment fertilized by Cusa. Minds such as Leonardo da Vinci, Luca Pacioli, Kepler, Shakespeare, Marlowe, Leibniz, and many more contributed to the increased rate of new wealth introduced to society's potential. Anyone who is familiar with oligarchism knows that this "agapic" approach of the nation-state was not to be tolerated by Venice. The Venetians rightly saw this new development as something that would loosen and ultimately break the system of war and usury, with which they had tightly gripped the world for three to four centuries. So for them, Cusa's influence had to be wiped out, especially his revolution in science.

The Franciscan Friar From Hell

One of the direct attacks on Cusa came from Zorzi himself (whom one might call the Franciscan friar from Hell). This attack on Cusa, which would (decades later) prompt a devastating rebuttal by Johannes Kepler, was written in a book of Zorzi's that gained wide influence, titled *De Harmonia Mundi* (*Harmony of the World*). This book became the inspiration for the Rosecrucians (a mystical cult), as well as freemasons (introduced into England by Zorzi), and similar weirdos. In it, Zorzi asserts that certain mystical rituals will give their initiates access to the symbols required to directly experience



Nicholas of Cusa (1401-1464). He founded modern experimental science, reviving the method of the Pythagoreans and Plato. Zorzi attacked him directly.

God through the senses. In the context of a pre-emptive attack on anyone who might dare disagree with his symbol-minded magic, he launches a direct assault, by name, on Cusa's philosophical method, claiming that it relies too much on "mere reason." He says: "Those who retreat from the direct knowledge of the universe will retreat into *De Docta Ignorantia*." This *De Docta Ignorantia* is the name given, by Cusa, to his best-known book, which he writes to liberate scientific method from the dead ideas of Aristotle and other superstitions.

To get a fuller sense of the dramatic intensity of this fight, consider Christopher Marlowe's play, *Dr. Faustus*. This play was a platform for Marlow's direct attack on the political influence of Zorzi in England, including the strange, supersti-

tious doctrines spread by Zorzi's influential writings of that period. Marlowe attaches the well-known profile of Zorzi to the image of Mephistopheles who, at one point, arrives and is about to get Faust to agree to give up his soul, in exchange for magical powers. Upon arrival, Mephistopheles is immediately denounced as "ugly" (as devils generally are), and is told to leave and come back with more flattering features: "Go and return an old Franciscan friar, that holy shape becomes a devil best." In Marlowe's play, once the devil returns in that preferred likeness of Zorzi, the deal is struck, and Faust is led down a delusory path (much like Henry VIII) to his own doom. Both Marlowe and his friend William Shakespeare were actively engaged in blowing the cover for this "nefarious" political operation being run against England over an extended period. To say the least, they were ill-treated for their efforts.

Henry VIII's England (where Zorzi would be deployed in 1529) was founded as the second modern nation-state by his father, Henry VII, in 1485-86. Henry VII's humanist impulses were characterized by the educational reforms he supported, as well as the idea of the "Common Good" which inspired him to put an end to the Wars of the Roses (85 years of civil war) and the bloody tyranny of Richard III.

England, with its new potential, began to free itself from the looting power wielded by Venice. To this end (about 20 years before Zorzi was sent there), England joined the Vatican-led League of Cambrai, along with France, Spain, and others, that would accomplish what before seemed impossible: bringing the Venetian Empire to its knees. Despite their status as history's most powerful financial empire, the Venetians could not overcome the technologically and culturally superior potential of the nation-states arrayed against their

overextended global empire. So they were defeated. Unfortunately, on the eve of the planned invasion and dismantling of Venice, the Venetians saved themselves by bribing Pope Julius II, a man we can safely conclude was not the best Pope ever. This betrayal allowed Venice to maintain its financial empire and regroup after this "setback."

Venice learned the hard way that empires are made susceptible when nations, having a sense of political/economic sovereignty, peacefully work together to promote science-driven physical-economic cooperation. In this light, Venice immediately moved to break up certain alliances, especially that of England and Spain; resorting, of course, to its preferred method: religious warfare. Thus, what Venice could not defeat through direct military confrontation would be undermined through more indirect means. Thus, as Marlowe informs us, the Devil returned, very shortly thereafter, as "an old Franciscan friar."

Just as Zorzi spearheaded his efforts for religious war with an attack on Cusa, so did Kepler spearhead his effort to end those Venetian-sparked religious wars by a decisive attack on Zorzi, and a defense of Cusa.

Kepler's Attack on Zorzi

Kepler, like Cusa, was committed to liberating science from the idol-worshipping of sense-perception. His revolutionary method for astronomy not only determined what the actual planetary orbits were, but he succeeded in defining the principle of universal gravitation. Kepler published a book which he called *Harmonice Mundi*, an intentionally ironic choice of title, placing in his crosshairs the Zorzi whose book effectively shares that name.

Kepler's book, dedicated to King
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James of England, was a playful intervention into a political climate which had been affected decades earlier by Zorzi's influence. To this purpose Kepler (an avowed follower of Cusa), not only directly attacked the "Zorzians" of his day, like Robert Fludd, but he also upheld Cusa's method. He demonstrated, with his rigorous approach to science, a demystified knowledge of astronomy (as opposed to Zorzi's astrology). In doing so, Kepler acted in a way that intended to determine the outcome of what was actually a political fight. The most explicit question for him was: Which worldview would prevail, the Venetian/Aristotelian view of Zorzi, which asserts that humans are genetically determined "sense-perceivers" (because of its rejection of the existence of the sovereign individual human mind) or, the worldview of Cusa and Plato, which hinges on the political idea that all minds have the potential to discover the principles of our reasonably organized universe?

Mephistopheles' Old Trick

Venice responded to Kepler—not by defending the ideas of the deceased Zorzi, who had served them well while he lived (so much for loyalty!), but by putting Galileo forward, as a way to overshadow Kepler's monumental achievements. Galileo's empiricism, despite its "scientific" posture, is based on the same wild-eyed Venetian rejection of the human mind, which Zorzi possessed. Again, Mephistopheles returns with new features, but without changing the same old dirty underwear of oligarchical thinking: Impose the assumptions that will get fools to embrace their own shackles.

Understanding this Venetian attack on science, and its related method, is the only real way to understand how the Venetian system of Zorzi's time operat-



The title of Kepler's magnum opus, "Harmony of the World," was ironically chosen as a polemic against Zorzi's cultish tract of similar name.

ed. Just as Venice played both sides in its effort to destroy scientific progress, it employed the same duplicity to wipe out the Renaissance political environment in which that scientific progress occurred. The Venetian role in manipulating both the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation is typical of this. When the dispute arose concerning whether or not Henry VIII would be allowed to divorce Catherine of Aragon, there were many diplomatic alternatives to a violent break with the Church. Whatever the problems would have been otherwise, one thing is absolutely clear: Once Venice gets involved in a "sex scandal," everybody gets screwed!

Francesco Zorzi's influence guided the imperial pride and libido of the foolish Henry VIII into political tragedy. In 1529, Zorzi decided to augment his long resumé as a Venetian spy and diplomat by becoming a "marriage counsellor" to a horny and foolish king. Zorzi's deploy-

ment into England was not a blind venture into "virgin" political territory. (Venice had an extremely sophisticated system of intelligence and diplomacy.) Henry had been sold on Zorzi's status as an "expert" interpreter of old Hebrew text, particularly, because he was convinced that Zorzi would use this "expertise" to give a verdict in favor of a King's divine right to "get some." The deal went as planned. Zorzi ruled (like a character from Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*) that the King could have all the pounds of flesh he wanted. Zorzi said that the Pope never had a right to annul Henry's first marriage before he married Catherine. So that, legally, according to our sex counsellor, Henry never really married Catherine to begin with.

These hasty developments, including the "off with his head" command of the King, against Thomas More (another premature ejaculation arranged by Venice), caused England to lose its mind. The advice from Henry's sex counsellor did succeed. It succeeded in making Henry a man that the ladies would die for, but it also succeeded in preparing Europe to give birth to more than a hundred years of religious war. (Some more honest sex advisor, amidst Hell's bellowing flames, might ask that foolish King: "Well damn, Henry! Do you really think she was that good?")

Were Zorzi alive today, he might have insinuated himself into political influence by posing as the sex counsellor that Vice President Cheney actually needs. He might advise Cheney to gain public support for his pro-torture, globalization, "mini-nukes" policy by saying publicly that Lynne Cheney's imposition of strange habits in the bedroom is the origin of his desire to torture prisoners, and whip nations into submission. This kind of Vice would, of course, serve Venetian interests.

—Alex Getachew