

BOLETIN
BOGIANEN IN ACTION

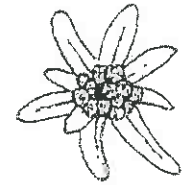
Andrew M. Canepa, *Editor*

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President's Message

So far this year we have had two very successful social activities: the Bagna Cauda feed at the Galileo Club of Richmond and the Scampagnata at the Viano Winery of Martinez.

On Sunday, November 6, at 2:00 PM, our focus shifts westward to the San Francisco Peninsula with a complete Piedmontese dinner at the Stella Alpina Osteria in Burlingame, where you'll find out what *brasà al bareul* is all about. The cost per person—highly subsidized, by the way—is only \$40. Send your checks, made out to Piemontesi nel Mondo, by October 31st, to Claudia Albano, 106 Arlington Ave., Kensington, CA 94707.



In due time, you will receive a dues notice for 2023. When you do, you'll notice that annual membership has been reduced from \$35 to \$20. This has been done to retain current members and to encourage them to extend that membership to family and friends.

We need an infusion of new blood on our board of directors in order to bring fresh ideas and input aimed at improving the Piemontesi nel Mondo. If you're interested or have a recommendation to make, please send me an email at jadnot@yahoo.com. — Joseph Tonda

Piedmont, the Poorest Region in Northern Italy?

According to an item posted on the website *EasyItalianNews.com* for September 15th, our region is the North's poorest as measured by two parameters. In Italy, there is something called *reddito di cittadinanza*, a minimum safety-net income provided by the central government to indigent families. It is in effect a measure of poverty. 6% of families residing in Piemonte receive this supplement, the highest rate in northern Italy, and fully 7% of families in Turin. In Milan, the proportion receiving this supplement is only 3.5%. While in other northern regions, the poverty rate has declined since the abatement of the pandemic, in Piemonte it hasn't. Caritas, the Catholic philanthropic agency, runs *centri di ascolto* in every diocese. These centers are multi-service hubs providing assistance to immigrants, the elderly, substance abusers, and the poor. Caritas reports that just this year requests for assistance in Turin have increased by 40%, and a further increase is expected as electricity and heating costs rise. No reason is given, however, for Piemonte lagging behind other northern regions.

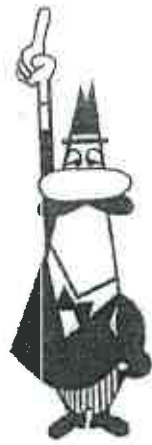
Dateline Zhmerynka, 1945

After liberation by the Soviet army from the Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp, Primo Levi initiated a long and winding road back to his native Torino, a circuitous route which took him through most of eastern and central Europe and lasted from January 27 to October 19, 1945. Levi described this tortuous trek in his memoir *La tregua* (*The Truce*), published by Einaudi in 1963. One of the stops along the way was the town of Zhmerynka in Ukraine. On the main street there was a primitive map of Europe painted on a wooden panel attached to two poles stuck into the ground. It had been placed there perhaps to help its inhabitants follow the course of the war. The part devoted to Italy identified only four cities, obviously in the Cyrillic alphabet: Rome, Venice, Naples... and *Dronero*. Go figure! *The Truce* was made into a movie starring John Turturro in 1997. I watched it at the Castro Theater as part of a Jewish Film Festival. I shouldn't have.

The Youngest Living Cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church

That would be Giorgio Marengo, raised to the position of Prince of the Church by Pope Francis in the consistory of 27 August as an under-80-year-old member of the College of Cardinals and therefore eligible to vote for a new pope in the next conclave. He was born in Cuneo on June 7, 1974, and is thus only forty-eight years old. Marengo is the Apostolic Prefect in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, and he ministers over a truly sparse congregation of 1,300 Catholics in the entire country. A graduate of Turin's Liceo Classico Cavour, Marengo entered the missionary order of La Consolata in 2000 and was ordained a priest the following year. The Consolata Missionaries were founded by Blessed Giuseppe Allamano in 1901. Allamano was born in Castelnuovo in the province of Asti, birthplace of Saints Don Bosco and Giuseppe Cafasso, both highlighted in previous issues of the *Boletín*. (In fact, Cafasso was Allamano's maternal uncle.)

L'Omino coi Baffi



“The Little Man with Whiskers” is the registered trademark of Bialetti Industrie S.p.A., a manufacturer of cookware, small kitchen appliances, and an iconic Italian product known and loved throughout the world—the Moka espresso coffee pot. Alfonso Bialetti, after having apprenticed for a decade in the French aluminum industry, founded the company in 1919 as a small metal and machine workshop in Crusinallo di Omegna in the province of Novara. In 1933, his focus turned to the production of the Moka *caffettiera*, a simple stove-top gadget for brewing an espresso without having to go down to the corner *caffè*. Besides being practical, it was a true work of art, with its clean straight lines and octagonal shape conforming to the Art Deco sensibility of the period, so much so that a Moka Express is enshrined in New York's Museum of Modern Art and in the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum.

Sales in Italy took off after World War Two, following a marked decline in the price of both aluminum and coffee. A 2016 survey found that fully 90% of Italian households owned one. Postwar Italian emigration spread its popularity to Latin America. In Miami, the Moka pot is the *cafetera* par excellence for brewing a classic *café cubano*. According to the manufacturer, since its inception in 1933, 300 million units have been sold worldwide. And, as with many other stay-at-home, do-it-yourself products, a spike in sales followed the Covid lockdowns of 2020.

The Bialetti Moka is just one more product ideated and manufactured in Piemonte and known for its world-class primacy of design. It's right up there with the sleek Olivetti Lettera 22 portable typewriter, the high-end pricey kitchenware and decorative items produced by Alessi in Crusinallo (of all places!), and all those *carozzerie*, car design studios—such as Pininfarina, Ghia, Giugiaro, Bertone—that have stamped their brands on prestigious automobiles since after the Second World War. At the time, Italy had few natural resources, its industries were shattered by extensive wartime bombing and by the preceding period of fascist autarchy (We'll go it alone!), but intelligence, aesthetic sensibility, creativity and *estro* were readily available. And Piemonte became a world center of modern design.

The Teaser from the Last Issue

Who is the most famous living Salesian (or ex-Salesian)? The answer is Jean-Bertrand Aristide. Born in 1953, he was ordained a Salesian priest in 1982. In 1988, the Salesian order cut ties to him, due to his embrace of liberation theology and to his pursuit of social justice through political activism. In 1991, Aristide was the first ever democratically elected president of Haiti, only to be toppled later that year by a violent rightist coup. Aristide served as president a couple of more times. He had gone into exile, but now lives back in Haiti. God save him!
