

ITALIAN PATRIOTS ON THE AMERICAN AND FRENCH REVOLUTIONS

From Matteo Galdi, *Effemeridi Repubblicane*

1796

It was clear that, in order to bring back the French people (which was fighting between misery and death) to its natural state, a revolution, better, a true *palingenesis*, was needed.

This state of chaos reawakened in the French their weakened spirits: sometimes it is in the agony of death that you see the best impulses of human nature. People started to think, then to talk, then to write. [...] the Encyclopedists made themselves the responsible of the cause of humanity and finally awakened people from their lethargy.

[...] The most revolutionary pieces of writing were being produced, sometimes right next to the fire that had been started to burn them. Men were being instructed in their rights, and their philosophy were gradually changing the *profession of political faith of all men*: everywhere you could hear voices in favor of democracy, even though this democracy (like Plato's republic) did not exist. Who could have imagined that it would finally emerge in America? It did, building on the genius of Penn, and the recent genius of Franklin. [...] France, which had given the Americans weapons to defend themselves from the angry mother country of Britain [...] was the first to take advantage of the example set by its daughter: it overthrew the old temple of the throne, and crashed its idols under its feet [...]. In vain tyranny armed itself against the new-found freedom. [...] The strength of freedom won in France and all across Europe.

[...] A kind of federalism still currently exists in America. It is true that the dangers coming from it are smaller than those that that republic could incur into if it was located in Europe; but this will not protect it from infinite evils if it does not reform its constitution.

[...] The efforts of all the Franklins, the Adams, the de Mablys, who struggled so much to give America a constitution were not sufficient to get rid of all corruption in that republic. It is true that the true patriots of Philadelphia are still working to reform the legislation of the thirteen United States, and the constitution of the republic; but none of this will ever be enough if they do not manage to revise the old legislation in its entirety, establishing a system of public education that will be [...] homogeneous, and if they do not finally abandon all influences of the English mother country. [...] The only evils they have to fear come from the anti-democratic principles of Great Britain [...] and fact that their American federalism allows them to enter indirectly in their government a naturally inimical government that will influence their public and private deliberation. Americans, [...] reform your federative government. Make your republic truly one and indivisible: then [...] you will establish the tree of liberty all across America.

Source: Matteo Galdi, *Effemeridi Repubblicane* (Milan), vol. 1, 1796, 21-22, 105-108. Translated by Anna Vincenzi.

From Giuseppe Lattanzi, *Historical-political speech on the prompt proposed by the General Administration of Lombardy: Which among the free governments is most conducive to the happiness of Italy?*

1796

5 The Americans have broken the iron scepter of this new Carthage [England], thus allowing liberty to revive and with solemn and majestic steps cross the Ocean, move to France, Brabant, and Holland, so that it could teach us, more than anyone else, which of the free governments is most conducive to the happiness of Italy.

Source: Giuseppe Lattanzi, “Discorso storico-politico sul quesito progettato dall’amministrazione generale della lombardia: quale dei governi liberi meglio convenga alla felicità dell’italia? Di Publicola Tiberino,” in *Alle origini del Risorgimento*, ed. Armando Saitta, vol. 2 (Rome, 1964), 151. Translated by Anna Vincenzi.

From Francesco Astore, *Republican Catechism*

1799

10 [We] heard someone say that the principles of liberty and the extension of the rights of the Citizen against the usurpations of the Tyrants had first sprouted in England, and then had been transplanted to English America, and were exported to France by Franklin. [...] [We deny that] the English [...] gave any contribution to the liberty that the invincible French nation has brought to Europe. [...] The English government is completely different than the one set up by the Constitution of the French Republic [...] as light is different from darkness. [...] The Chaos of the English government could never have anything to teach [to the French republic], such a wise, happy republic as no one has seen in history, and as the highest English minds could not have conceived.

Source: “Catechismo repubblicano in sei trattenimenti a forma di dialoghi del Cittadino Francesco Astore,” in Pasquale Matarazzo, *Catechismi repubblicani* (Napoli, 1999) 46. Translated by Anna Vincenzi.