

# 11

## *From revolutionary anarchists to saints: three extraordinary generations*

**This curious story involves three generations - the first is that of Anna Kuliscioff, Andrea Costa and Filippo Turati, Socialists, anarchists and atheists; la second, that of Luigi Gavazzi and his wife Andreina Costa Kuliscioff, and the third, that of their monastic offspring, Guido (Don Egidio) and Anna Maria (Sister Maria Angela).**

### **LUIGI GAVAZZI (1880-1917)**

He was born in Desio on August 3, 1880. After graduating in chemistry in Pavia, Luigi joined his brothers in running the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi Company in Desio.

His various other activities involved the town council of Desio, the newly-established welfare services, the political support of moderate Liberals and the organisation of schools for the local people.

He was President of the Vestry-board, the Mutual Aid Society and the Pupils' Benevolent Fund, and was Senior Town Councillor of Education. In addition, he was a manager of the Agricultural Union of Desio.

After the death of his father Egidio (1910), he was called to take his place as Chairman of the Electric Tramways Company and, in the same year, joined the Board of Directors of the Agricultural Bank of Desio (which later became the Bank of Desio), of which the Gavazzi Company was the major client (the Chairman of the Bank, Biancotti, was the director of the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi Weaving Factory)<sup>1</sup>.

On September 3, 1904 he married Andreina Costa Kuliscioff (Imola, 8.12.1881, Rome, 23.11.1959), who bore the surnames of both her parents - Anna Kuliscioff, a Ukrainian Jewess from Odessa, and Andrea Costa.

He died in San Remo on April 21, 1917.



Andreina Costa Kuliscioff (1881-1959) and Luigi Gavazzi (1880-1917).

<sup>1</sup> In 1915 a large part of the Agricultural Bank's wealth was deposited in the Italian Discount Bank, a Rome-based bank of Catholic inspiration, whose Board of Directors included Senator Lodovico Gavazzi and of which, in 1916, the Agricultural Bank became a «correspondent».

However, the death of Luigi, the first prominent member of the Desio family to become directly involved with the Agricultural bank, at the young age of 37, contributed to reducing the prospects of closer relations with other, larger banks.

## **ANNA KULISCIOFF (1857-1925)<sup>2</sup>**

### *Birth and adolescence*

«There is only one man in Italy, and he is a woman». That's what Antonio Labriola wrote to Friedrich Engels in 1893 about Anna Kuliscioff, in whose «subversive» political salon in the Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II in Milan the leftist European intelligenzia and unionism would mature, and which would become the most important salon in Europe.

Anja Rozenstejn was born on January 9, 1857 in Moskaja, in the territory of Kherson, Crimea, in Tsarist Russia, to upper class, wealthy Jewish parents who converted to Orthodox Christianity. She led an adventurous life.

Gifted with a superior intelligence, a strong personality, great beauty and charm, she proved to be an excellent student. Her father was rightly very proud to have a daughter who was so intelligent and had «the face of an angel, with blue eyes and golden curls» and assigned her education, according to the customs of the aristocracy, to governesses, tutors and music and language teachers.

She began to conspire while still at school; at the age of 14 she was already an underground revolutionary and Populist, and advocated the non-violent practice of propaganda to arouse the masses and encourage them to stand up for their rights.

In 1872, at 15, she graduated from high school with a gold medal and in the same year, taking part in the cultural-ideological stirrings defined as Nihilism, joined other young people who were moving abroad in order to continue their studies at university, which in Russia was difficult to enter and expressly forbidden to women.

In Zurich she enrolled in the Department of Exact Sciences at the Polytechnic, perhaps the first woman in the entire civilized world to choose technical sciences; she quickly became «a celebrity». This was a period of intense political stirrings and rapid revolutionary indoctrination of a heterogeneous nature.

Eventually, her great enthusiasm for active politics led her to abandon her university studies. She became the most courageous driving force of the revolutionary group led by Bakunin. In 1873 she returned to Odessa, Russia, and joined a Populist group engaged in spreading propaganda in favour of freedom and justice among the people. Also in the group was Pëter Makarevič, whom she had married in Zurich several months earlier. In 1874 year Makarevič was arrested and sentenced to hard labour in Siberia; she never saw him again.

### *Change of name*

It was after the first episodes of persecution and her involvement in a political trial that the young woman decided to change her name. In Kiev, around 1877, Anna Rozenstejn became Anna Mikailowna. In 1878, in Paris, she took on the name she was to carry for the rest of her life - Anna Kuliscioff (a sobriquet, meaning labourer in Russian).

<sup>2</sup> Taken partly from Mino Martelli, *Andrea Costa e Anna Kuliscioff: rivelazioni sulla coppia da nuovi documenti*, Edizioni Paoline, Rome, 1980.

Escaping arrest thanks to her extremely quick reflexes and perhaps also her pure, disarming beauty and an elegance that was more aristocratic than revolutionary, she fled to Kiev, where she met Vera Zasulich and joined the group of the *buntary* (rebels of the South), supporters of the Bakuninist view that armed insurrection was an urgent priority. The disappointing results of these political convictions drove her to elaborate new theories that she had previously expounded to her former leader Michail Bakunin (1814–1876), who at the time, however, had rejected them<sup>3</sup>.

Eluding the police once again, she took refuge in Kiev, until April 1877, when she procured a false passport and crossed the Russian border for the last time. She settled in Lugano, where the most prominent members of international Socialism were based, and there she made a series of contacts that were fundamental for her cultural and political development.

### *The meeting with Andrea Costa*

In August 1877, at the Saint-Imier Conference, Anna met Andrea Costa, also an exile in the Swiss Confederation, who had been sent to the conference by the Matese group. The two were immediately drawn to each other, both sentimentally and ideologically – so much so that in November 1877 they moved together to Paris to work in the International Interaction of Kropotkin. In this environment, with its rich political content, Anna Kuliscioff soon attained the important role of *agent de propagation*. The many valuable practical and conceptual experiences she had acquired formed the basis for a less extremist re-elaboration of her political convictions.

### *First arrest*

She was arrested in Paris in March 1878, with Costa and others, then released and expelled from France. Returning to Switzerland in the summer, she began to take an interest in Italian affairs and made contact with the group of anarchists close to Costa.

Anna Kuliscioff (1857-1925) and Andrea Costa (1851-1910), parents of Andreina.

<sup>3</sup> The unrest that was poured out so generously turned sour in the general inertia of the masses, in the suspicions of some and the aversion of others. There was nothing to be done. The words did not generate action, but only persecution and prison for those who spread them. It was at this time, in around 1876, that Anna, disillusioned by the ineffectiveness of verbal Populism, decided to opt for the anarchic Nihilism of Bakunin, which Costa had already embraced years before. For Anna also, who was familiar with and rejected the doctrines of Marx and Engels as the entombers of freedom, Bakunin became a leader to follow, or at least to put to the test. Once again, however, the outcome was negative. The «revolt of the peasants of Cighirin», with its military planning and its arms caches, which she was preparing in the Ukraine, failed even before it was launched, just as the march on Bologna, organised by Costa, had also failed around two years previously.

In addition, the revolutionary group in Kiev, where Anna used to work, was discovered and closed down by the Tsar's police, and all its members outlawed.

Wanted by the Tsarists since 1875, Kuliscioff was forced to flee once more to Switzerland, and so it was that on April 14, 1877, armed with a false passport, she was again lucky enough to elude the border police, who were lying in wait for her.





Another photo of Anna Kuliscioff.

### *Second and third arrests in Italy*

In October of 1878 she was arrested in Florence, where she had gone to attend the anarchist meeting, and was imprisoned until December 1879. The trial, which took place between 1879 and 1880, brought her great fame.

A past which was romantically and mysteriously revolutionary, along with her undeniable personal charm, contributed to creating the Kuliscioff legend that Italy was experiencing in this period<sup>4</sup>. This artificial construction of the character induced many to overestimate the role that Anna played in the Costa turning-point of 1879.

At a little over 21, she appeared to the public and jury alike as «a Slavic virgin, with the head of the Madonna, a white skin flushed with good health, and long, shiny blonde hair braided on her shoulders, resembling a graceful Pre-Raphaelite figure».

Although their respective political elaborations did not coincide, Andrea Costa and Anna Kuliscioff worked together to prepare the first issue of the journal named *The International Magazine of Socialism*.

They were both arrested and imprisoned in April of 1880. Costa remained in prison in Perugia, while Anna, after her release, moved to Lugano.

### *The birth of Andreina Costa Kuliscioff*

In 1881 Anna lived for almost a year in Imola with Costa (who had meanwhile been released from prison) and little Andreina Rosa Rosalia, the fruit of their union, the bond of their shared ideas and persecutions and the seal of their complete fusion. Andrea recognised his daughter as his own, but did not reveal the name of her mother. Official recognition on the part of the mother did not occur until ten years later. The reasons for this can easily be traced to the abnormal legal status of Anna Kuliscioff.

Andrea and Anna were, respectively, 30 and 24 years old.

When the baby was born, Anna «undauntedly took upon herself the education and nutrition of her child» in the rare pauses between her university studies, medical practice, politics, trials and prison. The other intervals brought from Imola the first sowing of the seeds of Christian faith in the heart of Andreina, as it was Mariuccia, Andrea Costa's very religious sister, who took the little girl under her wing and took the place of Anna whenever she was called away.

Contacts with nuns in Milan, the school, and especially her encounter with a certain student from the middle class, her Catholic family and Luigi Gavazzi, who adored her, completed the religious instruction of this daughter of the Russian rebel and the Italian revolutionary<sup>5</sup>. In the «journal» in which Luigi Gavazzi set down his memoirs during the last months of his life,

<sup>4</sup> An acquaintance wrote of her: «It was impossible to put into words the impression that her beauty and her intelligence left on all those who came near her». Her charm was increased, moreover, by the tone of her voice, her exotic accent and polite way of speaking. It was also written that she was «a woman with all the physical qualities of an exceptional femininity and the mental qualities of an exceptional masculinity».

he wrote of her: «She had always been, I believe, a deeply Christian soul, despite the fact that she was brought up in an unreligious (albeit not anti-clerical) environment. While she was still a young girl studying at high school and university she often felt drawn to the Church by an unknown force, and there, although she did not pray, being unaware of the sublime formulas of Christian prayer, yet she found a way to lift her soul up to her Creator, in a silent hymn of love, hope and faith ... She was Christian in her soul even before being baptised».

Her closed environment and family obligations induced Anna to leave Emilia Romagna and settle with her daughter in Bern. Here she started a fruitful collaboration with Plechanov, founder of the Work Emancipation Group, which theorised the application of Marxist criteria also to under-developed Russia and the necessity of founding a new party. Her relationship with this group allowed her to develop a new ideology at a time when the Italian Socialists still had no more than a vague knowledge of Marxism. Her adherence to the ideas of Plechanov marked her breaking away from Costa's Socialism, which was increasingly open to a tactical alliance with the extreme Left.

This political dissent was accompanied by a personal separation - in 1885 Anna Kuliscioff announced to Costa that she was ending their relationship. In Switzerland, meanwhile, she had begun studying again, though this time abandoning her old subject of engineering and opting for medicine. With the deterioration of her lung illness, contracted during her incarceration, she decided to move to Naples.

### *The meeting with Filippo Turati*

Here, in the same year (1885) she met Filippo Turati, who was to become her companion for the rest of her life; the social, political and academic environment of Naples, however, she found to be closed, misogynist and unstimulating. She graduated from the University of Naples in the academic year 1886-87, and in the following two years lived in Padua, Como, Milan and Pavia, working towards a specialisation in gynaecology that led her to study the subject of puerperal fever in depth.



Filippo Turati  
(1857-1932) and Anna  
Kuliscioff.

<sup>5</sup> ACA, *Ricordi di Don Egidio*. Regarding education, Anna never attempted to exert undue influence over her daughter, but rather justified her alienation from Socialism in an interview with the writer Virgilio Brocchi, a great admirer of Kuliscioff: «Living with us», she explained, «at the centre of our struggles and our sufferings but, much worse, in the midst of our party disputes, her [Andreina's] heart broke away from Socialism, or rather, felt that its thirst for the ideal could not be quenched by our earthly faith, and almost unconsciously she turned to ... something that could not disappoint her». «Religious faith», suggested her interviewer. «These matters of the spirit», continued Anna, «involve another power which cannot be explained, but only perceived. You have certainly observed how many daughters of Socialist parents take the veil. Why? I do not know, but it must be that what occurs among the generations of men is like what can be seen in agriculture ... So the revolutionary and positivist generation, having exhausted all the vital energies that constituted its driving force, often transmits to its children the spiritual energies - mystic energies - that in itself have been dormant, but secretly active, just as every power that is not applied accumulates. I refer to religious mysticism, because it is not unlikely that our human faith is also tinged with mysticism.» (Carmelo di Arezzo, Sister Romana Palozzi, *L'anima cristiana di Anna Kuliscioff cofondatrice del socialismo italiano*, in *Rivista di Vita Spirituale*, June 1980).

During these years Anna stayed away from active politics to dedicate herself to her profession and her commitment, as she herself would say, to becoming a doctor of the poor. In the meantime, however, she nevertheless managed to make contact with the Italian Democratic environment. Anna Kuliscioff played an important role, therefore, in the «movement towards Socialism» of many Italian intellectuals in the 1890s, although her singularity rests in the fact that she urged and directed the process of the distinction of Italian Socialism from Progressive Democracy, and that of anarchism from Labourism.

Her influence on Turati, with whom she settled down finally in Milan, was remarkable. One result of this influence was the birth in 1889 of the Milanese Socialist League, the initial nucleus of the future party, and then the birth of the Italian Socialist Party<sup>6</sup>, as the centre for the original maturation of the political ideas. In addition, she played a significant role in the foundation and direction of the magazine *Critica Sociale*, which, again on her initiative, published the series *A Library of Italian Socialism*, as well as the most important literary works of international Socialism.

This influence was evident in the ranks of the Socialist movement, as is expressed clearly in the famous above-mentioned aphorism by Antonio Labriola, that «in Italian Socialism only one man counts, and she is a woman, and a Russian to boot: Anna Kuliscioff».

### *The fourth arrest*

It was, in actual fact, Anna's prominent position within the Movement that led to her fourth arrest, at the end of the century, following the Milanese revolts of 1898, in which she did not personally take part. In consequence of this episode she spent eight months in prison, during which time her pulmonary edema, arthritis and sciatica grew worse. The trial in Milan, however, proved to be another occasion for confirming and spreading the Kuliscioff legend<sup>7</sup>.

She was a feminist «ante litteram», a cultural revolutionary who fought for women's emancipation.

As her health continued to deteriorate she was reduced to immobility and isolation, and with

<sup>6</sup> The Italian Socialist Party was born in Genoa in 1892. Anna was prominent among its founders and holds a place of honour in the history of Italian Socialism.

The founding of the Italian Socialist Party confirmed the final split with the Anarchist Movement, with the idea that it would represent the condition guaranteeing that the new political party would be based on the same level as the traditional Leftist formation, while gradually wearing away its consent, thanks to a very clear and precise policy of support for workers' rights.

<sup>7</sup> Since the beginning of the 1890s she had begun to be known also for her involvement in themes regarding the conditions of women.

The first and most famous conference was entitled *The Monopoly of Man*. Following this, she began the famous battle for social legislation in favour of female workers. The feminine question, the problems of women's emancipation, and equality between the sexes, the defence of the rights of women and minors in the workplace, the attaining of civil and political rights and, predominantly, the right to vote, constituted a fundamental part of her theoretic and practical activity, as a writer, agitator and political leader.

Thus the «golden-haired Russian», as she was often called, firmly bound the cause of women's emancipation to the cause of Socialism.

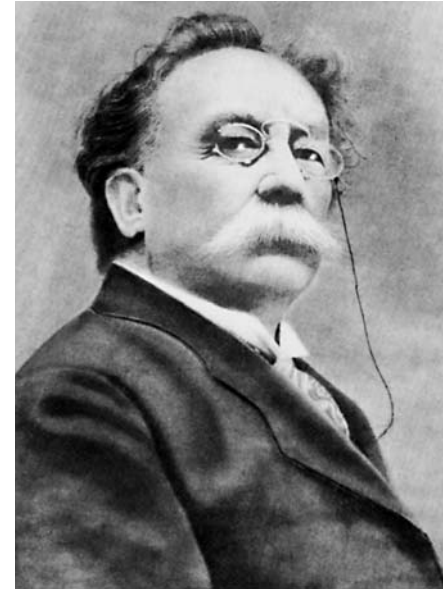
She was always in the fore regarding social denunciations: «A woman with the same job is always paid much less than a man. Here in the Milanese district, male weavers receive 2 lire and 35 centesimi and female weavers 1 lira and 18 centesimi». Addressing herself to the women, she would say: «Demand your eight hours per day, with equal work, equal pay, the freedom of access to your own wages, the right to abstain from industrial and agricultural work during the last two months of pregnancy and the two months following the birth, and the establishing of a minimum legal wage for work carried out at home». And again: «Let us not pay heed to those who tell us we are ignorant, incapable, or unprepared for political life. No-one has ever learned before getting down to work. You cannot swim unless you first jump in the water. You cannot sew unless you first take up the needle.

the simultaneous decline of the Democratic-Reformist prospects, Anna Kuliscioff retired from active politics.

With the outbreak of war, she attempted to reconcile the initial internationalist labour pacifism with a realistic consideration of the impossibility of Italy's continued neutrality and, subsequently, with the positive support of an intervention alongside the Entente. In 1917, in fact, she put great pressure on Turati and Treves to abandon their non-interventionist line<sup>8</sup>. She died in Milan on December 29, 1925 and was buried in the Monumental Cemetery, accompanied by a funeral procession of Socialists, who were subjected to the constant heckling and provocation of Fascists bands.

In accordance with her own wishes, Kuliscioff was cremated.

Andreina (or Ninetta, as she was known to her mother and Turati) had spent part of her youth in the care of Filippo Turati. Kuliscioff, Costa<sup>9</sup> and Turati<sup>10</sup>, were the «founding fathers» of Italian Socialism.



Andrea Costa  
photographed at the age  
of fifty.

The male working class was also once incapable and unprepared – they acquired skill by working. In the countries where the women take part in political life they prove to possess an intelligence and an energy that surpass those of men». She fought hard for women's right to vote. When Governor Giolitti presented a reform of the electoral law that excluded the right of women to vote, Kuliscioff wrote: «According to the proponent the right to vote can never be universal, because even the most flexible electoral legislations are in agreement concerning the exclusion of minors, the insane, convicts, etc., and it is in this etcetera and this pleasant company that women are, in fact, included». And when the Chamber rejected a Turati-Treves Socialist amendment formulated as: «Women are entitled to vote» (209 voted against, 48 voted for and 6 abstained), Anna commented ironically, «At this point an Italian, in order to one day become a citizen, need take only one precaution – to be born a male». In her campaign for women's emancipation from men, she also suggested this strategy: «generally, in order to be accepted, those who occupy a lower rung on the ladder of social co-existence must never attack their powerful enemies, but rather ask them humbly to grant some small request as a favour and a token of kindness, defend themselves from possible assaults and never resort to using the ruthless weapon of criticism; they must, in short, tune their voice in the key of humility, if they want to be heard at all». In the first years of the new century, Anna Kuliscioff emphasised several times the advisability of distancing the party from the sporadic episodes of insurrection, stressing the connection between Reformism and revolution, in dispute and opposition against the revolutionary wing of the Leftist Movement.

Later, the disappointing results of the Socialist parliamentary activity led her on a number of occasions to form accusations of pro-governmentalism against the Socialist group and especially Turati, without, however, toning down her condemnation of the armed struggle. In 1908 she fought intensely against all clerical interference in non-religious schools.

The beginning of the century was for Anna Kuliscioff the period when she developed her strategy of major reforms (tax, military, social, electoral and scholastic), in which she several times solicited Turati's support. With him, whose position was less radical both regarding the illiterate and women, she argued openly. From 1906–07 onwards she began another chapter of great commitment on the theme of conditions for women, concentrating her efforts on the defence of the vote for women.

<sup>8</sup> Regarding the events that shook Russia from 1917 onwards, Anna Kuliscioff, still anchored to internationalist Left Wing principles, strongly backed the revolution, but later equally strongly opposed the Bolshevik takeover. She regarded Mussolini's rise to power as inconceivable, and therefore transitory, and his aspiration to dictatorship, laden with demagogy and improvisation, too amateurish to deserve serious opposition. She did not consider it necessary, therefore, to form pacts with other Leftist powers, but rather recommended a fence-sitting tactic, for the sake of avoiding the rekindling of Fascist violence.

With the assassination of Matteotti and the failure of the «Aventino» she became totally disillusioned and the hopes she had put in the Democratic powers were replaced by a great bitterness, which accompanied her in her last months of life, while by this time Fascism triumphed in Italy.

<sup>9</sup> Andrea Costa (b. in Imola in 1851, d. in 1910), although he was Carducci's star pupil, nevertheless decided to abandon his literary studies to dedicate himself to politics, drawn by a revolutionary fervour. An Anarchist and Internationalist, the secretary of Bakunin, he was twice imprisoned for expressing his ideas, the first time in Bologna in 1874 and again in Paris in 1876. His sojourn in the French capital coincided with a profound ideological crisis, which directed him towards Reformist Socialism. Returning to Italy, he founded the Revolutionary Socialist Party of Emilia Romagna. In 1882 he became Deputy of Ravenna (the first Left Wing Deputy in Parliament) and began an intense Parliamentary activity in opposition of the railway conventions (1884), the African enterprise (1887), etc., while at the same time continuing to work zealously for the trade unions and the party, earning himself a reputation as the moral leader of Italian Socialism. Elected Mayor of Imola in 1893, he went on to receive the nomination of Vice-President of the Chamber (1908–1910).

He founded and was editor of several Socialist periodicals, including *Rivista Internazionale del Socialismo* (Milan, 1880) and the weekly magazine *Avanti!* (Imola, 1881).

<sup>10</sup> Filippo Turati (b. in Canzo in 1857, d. in Paris in 1932), the son of a Prefect, he took a degree in Law in Bologna and, after leaving the Radical Democratic party, in which had been an active supporter in his youth, first became involved with the Italian Labour Party (which he defended in 1886 from the attacks of Felice Cavallotti) and later founded, with the help of Kuliscioff (with

## ANDREINA COSTA KULISCIOFF (1881-1959)

### *The relationship with her mother and Filippo Turati and the marriage with Luigi Gavazzi*<sup>11</sup>

Andreina, affectionate, sensitive, and extremely attached to her mother and Turati, appeared not to have suffered any ill effects from the traumas of her childhood, her separation from her father or her boarding school years. She spent her adolescence quite serenely attending high school – during the very months of the 1898 upheavals, in fact, she was preparing for her high school diploma. Anna, Turati and her father had all been arrested, but she herself had been effectively shielded by their many friends and comrades and managed to withstand this great misfortune; she was, in fact, a great comfort to her mother at this time, visiting her almost daily.

Luigi and Andreina met in high school in 1898. Andreina alternated her studies with heart-wrenching visits to the prison of San Vittore to take food to her mother and, sometimes, to see her. She also visited her father in prison and wrote affectionate little letters to Turati. She graduated from high school with good grades and seemed to face the future with serenity. Probably out of devotion to her mother, who instilled in her a desire to become independent through her work, she had also chosen the medical profession as a career.

She first enrolled in the University of Bologna and seemed to be doing well. Anna, returning in the first autumn of the 1900s from Salsomaggiore (where she regularly went to receive treatment for her tubercular adenitis), stopped in Bologna to meet with Prampolini (who showed great friendship and kindness), and to try to arrange accommodation for Ninetta. Prampolini did find a room where, apparently, the girl was happy. «Poor Ninetta», wrote Anna to Turati, with a hint of self-justification, «she must be pampered a little, otherwise she might really become nostalgic.»

Anna had just returned to Milan when the landlady discovered that the girl was «an atheistic Socialist» and the fruit of an informal union, and threw her out of the house.

Ninetta was distraught; up until this time she had always lived among friends who lightened the load of her irregular situation. Only now, in Bologna, did she understand just how difficult

---

whom he kept very close ties, both ideologically and sentimentally), the Milanese Socialist League, whose aim was to spread Socialist awareness among the trade unions. Having thus achieved an important position in the emerging Socialist Movement, thanks partly to the creation of the magazine *Critica Sociale*, in 1892 he became the main founder of the Italian Workers' Party, overcoming the objections of the anarchists and the Labourites. During the difficult years of the Crispi reaction and the end-of-century crisis, Turati, who in 1896 had been elected Deputy, successfully directed the new party (which in 1895 took on the name of the Italian Socialist Party - PSI), inspiring the tactic of alliance with the «kindred» parties of the Democratic-Bourgeois Left Wing.

With the new century came the Giolitti period, and Turati was the recognised leader of the Reformist wing of the Socialist Movement, in favour of providing parliamentary support to the Piedmontese politician in exchange for measures favouring the working class.

Being a pacifist, with the outbreak of the First World War he opposed Italy's involvement, and later gave his support to the party line, which was summed up in the slogan «neither support nor sabotage». After the war, he remained firmly convinced that the working classes would gradually gain political power, harshly criticising the compromises of the Italian Socialist Party's majority wing while at the same time rejecting the revolutionary methods of the Russian Bolsheviks. In 1922 he left the Italian Socialist Party to found the Unitary Socialist Party. He became one of the most hard-line opponents of Fascism, participating, after the assassination of Matteotti, in the «Aventino» (1924).

From 1926 onwards Turati lived as an exile in France, where he was one of the founders of the Concentration of Anti-Fascist Action (1927), later supporting the re-unification of the Italian Socialist Party and the Italian Socialist Workers Party (formerly the Unitary Socialist Party) in July 1930.

<sup>11</sup> Marina Addis Saba, *Anna Kuliscioff: vita privata e passione politica*, Mondadori, Milan, 1993.



her position in society was. Anna, also faced with the same realisation, was plagued by remorse for her daughter's sake. She herself had lived a free life and paid an extremely high price to remain true to her Socialist convictions, even in her private life, but had not taken into account the price her daughter would be forced to pay. She saw how the girl suffered, losing interest in life, how she was slowly being overwhelmed by one depression after another and, whereas she had once spoke of graduating and becoming a doctor, she seemed now to have lost all interest in the future. Even though Turati, intervening generously with his influence as Deputy, had solved the problem of her lodgings in Bologna, Andreina returned home plagued by a series of ailments – it was not difficult for her mother, a very observant physician and keen psychologist, to perceive the cause of Ninetta's problems.

In going away from Milan, she had perhaps hoped to forget her teenage love for a certain schoolfellow. Possibly, she had already understood how difficult it would be, coming from such an unconventional life, to aspire to a normal life as a woman – to marry and have children, especially with the young man she was close to. After the Bologna episode her situation worsened; Ninetta was unable to take the blow and began to manifest increasingly serious symptoms of anxiety on a deep psychic level.

Her mother tried to dedicate herself to her daughter more and distract her. In the spring of 1901, despite her own increasingly precarious health, Anna took her daughter to visit her favourite city, Florence. Here they stayed in Via Santo Stefano and many friends came to see them and accompany them on their trips. At the end of March, however, the weather was cold and rainy, so that the walks, such as those to the Cascine park, were often transformed into exhausting *corvées*. Anna, moreover, was increasingly sensitive to the weather – a sunny day filled her with joy, but the rain and the cold, which were truly detrimental to her health as the slightest cold could worsen her chronic tubercular condition, plunged her into depression. She was then 44 years of age, bad-tempered and with a face full of wrinkles; in a letter to Filippo she wrote: «It is useless to wander here and there in search of good health, because I can no longer be well except with you; if it were not for Ninetta I would take the train today, and to think that I must find a way to amuse myself for fifteen more days...».

After the summer another attempt was made to solve Andreina's situation. The girl enrolled in the University of Rome, again in the school of medicine, and was offered hospitality in the home of Leonida and Carolina Bissolati, who had no children of their own and welcomed her with open arms. Anna hoped that Costa, whose duties as Deputy obliged him to spend most of his time in Rome, would also make the most of this opportunity to build a closer relationship with his daughter and become a loving support in her life, but this did not hap-



Sketch of Andreina Costa Kuliscioff in court at Filippo Turati's trial in 1898 (from *L'Illustrazione Italiana*, 1898).

pen. Although she felt welcome and comfortable in the Bissolati's home, Ninetta found it extremely difficult to settle down in Rome. The whole Socialist *entourage*, considering her a sort of mascot, showed great kindness to the daughter of Anna, Costa and Turati, taking her around the city on sightseeing tours or into the countryside for excursions or lunches. Far from Milan, however, the girl came to realise that her heart was with Luigi, a boy who, it seemed, she had absolutely no hopes of marrying.

He came from a very wealthy and very religious family, in fact, whose clerical-moderate and conformist opinions were as distant as possible from her own environment, from the non-conformism of her own family and her mother, who had violated the middle class rules on the strength of her solid socialist and feminist convictions. Ninetta herself did not share these convictions, and the conflict between her total devotion to her mother and her middle class aspirations had brought out her fragility and affected her health.

Sick at heart, the girl returned to Milan and abandoned her studies. Her mother spoke rarely and with great discretion about her to Turati. Often, however, she confided in her closest friends, and it was clear how greatly she suffered for her daughter. To Bonomi she wrote that «Andreina has been hurt badly and is prey to the most unhealthy melancholy.» Anna herself was quite remorseful – she had not calculated that in living her own life in keeping with her ideals, and willingly accepting the difficulties and suffering that came her way, she would one day ruin that of her daughter. Both she and Costa were virtually «terrorists» in the eyes of the conventional thinkers of the day, and her free relationship with Turati could only arouse the disapproval of the ultra-Catholic Gavazzis. Luigi and Andreina met again in the winter of 1903-1904 and were engaged, to the perplexity of Luigi's parents and siblings.

Luigi was sent to America with the pretext of setting up a timber business; he obediently undertook the journey, but those who hoped that the distance between him and Andreina would help him to forget her were disappointed. The young man who was destined to become her one true love was, as Anna Kuliscioff was later to write, not only «good-hearted, amiable and hard-working», but also «in love as I have seen few young men capable of being.»

Anna's future relationship with her son-in-law was to be one of «empathy and understanding», thanks to the integrity and coherence with which he lived his Christian faith.

When the matter finally came out, for three weeks Kuliscioff could hardly sleep for worrying. Then, on March 17, she wrote to Turati: «I think at last I can sleep peacefully, because things seem to be going well regarding Ninetta's future, even though up until today I had my doubts. The young man is the Gavazzi you saw at home during the two years when he was studying with Ninetta in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years of high school; he fell in love with her then and has remained faithful ever since. Now he is 24 years old, has a chemistry degree and owns a company with his own invention patent. He is an eager and steadfast worker, in spite of his father's millions.

The problem was his family, but he was determined that, should they not give their consent, he would marry Ninetta anyway. Yesterday he had a long talk with his parents, who told

him that if he has chosen her, she must be a good girl, and that they will treat her as they do the other children who leave their homes, that when she becomes his wife her family will become part of their family, but as far as the world, their conservative acquaintances, the priests and the *Perseveranza* are concerned, the union is the fruit of his will alone and without their participation. They could not have shown greater virtue and intelligence. This morning, the mother went with her son to choose the engagement ring, and today the first symbolic nuptial ceremony took place with the first link in the marriage chain. He is a good, cheerful and likeable fellow but, above all, what cheers me is that he is in love and works. I do not tell anyone about the matter ... although I am certain that by now the whole of Milan is talking about it. Indeed, in a few days, after the 29<sup>th</sup> of this month, they will begin looking for an apartment, because they would like to marry in August. The day that Ninetta ceases to be the source of my constant worry, I believe I shall also begin to enjoy a little peace of mind. And then I can die peacefully, without leaving tears and suffering behind me.

And we two old ones will become young again; I already have some wonderful plans, you'll see.» Anna was light-hearted, almost amused. She treated the subject, in giving this news to Turati, with calculated discretion, as her policy had always been to avoid troubling him with matters concerning Ninetta, as well as those regarding her own numerous physical ailments. Filippo had already proved himself to be good and tolerant, and where politics were involved Anna was quite free with her rebukes, irony and heavy criticisms, but in private matters he seemed to think that she should take care of things herself – her own and those of Ninetta were women's matters! (It is true that the decisions regarding her life and her daughter's were made entirely at her own discretion).

This, however, was a very unusual situation – her worries about Ninetta and her future, as well as the awareness (which increased as time went on) of the responsibility she had assumed with regard to her daughter through her ex-marital relationship, had been for her a cause of secret, unvoiced suffering. Now that the problem had found a happy solution, all Anna's relief was expressed in grateful tenderness.

When Anna approached Costa with the subject of Ninetta, however, it was a completely different matter. The girl's relationship with her father was not very smooth; Costa was touchy, and Anna had to be very careful in asking his opinion and, at times, his permission when making decisions involving their daughter. She received invitations to go to Courmayeur with the Lombroso family or to the seaside to bathe – excursions which were very beneficial for her health – and she, who supported Ninetta completely by herself because Costa lived in a state of complete poverty, would approach him with as much tact and diplomacy as possible. Often, however, she would receive letters full of reproach and resentment, which she answered quite bluntly. One such example occurred in July of 1892, after a letter in which Costa had apparently indulged in what she referred to as «hysterical outbursts». Anna wrote to him, warning him that in sending such letters he risked losing his daughter's affection, «because, living with me, she is naturally attached to her mother as her only support, and all those who threaten to be a cause of sorrow and sadness to me lose her affection.»

Nevertheless, Andrea continued to complain about Ninetta's behaviour (although he saw her but rarely). Once again, in 1899, Anna patiently explained that, when parents are separated, the children become deeply attached to the one with whom they have lived since childhood. She was greatly surprised his complaints about Ninetta's obstinacy. «Think about it, Andrea – perhaps they are your own demands, instead ... I have always behaved as someone who must give everything but never asks anything of others, either now or in the future.» She had, perhaps, cultivated selfishness in Ninetta, but she did not regret it: «I see that the more she matures, the more she begins to feel her own individuality, the more attached she is to me, with affection and devotion that few children appear to have for their mothers.» There was only one thing that Costa could never doubt – the fact that the girl had always heard only good things about her father, both as a person and as a political figure; in fact, when Anna was in prison, Ninetta, knowing it made her happy, would tell her about her meetings with her father (who was also imprisoned), telling her that he was nice and that she loved him. In expressing her convictions, Anna was often harsh; once, in 1892, when Costa did not want to come up to her apartment to pick up Ninetta, she told him plainly, «No-one asks you to make sacrifices to overcome your aversion to coming to my «splendid apartment» (this was evidently the description used by Costa). If you don't want to come see me, then don't.» Costa would therefore pick up his daughter at the concierge's office and drop her off afterwards without ever stopping to see Anna. Nevertheless, her letters to him, though few, were more than affectionate and often laced with an acute longing, although she never spoke of the past.

When Andreina began to show the first symptoms of the psychological torments that afflicted her for some years, Anna explained the situation to Costa: «As Andreina has already written you», she said, «we have decided that she should suspend her studies for a year.» After this communication, in which she the plural indicated that Turati was in agreement, she went on to say how worried she was about their daughter's nervous ailments, not so much because they prevented her from graduating, but because she risked becoming a misfit in life. She again insisted, for the sake of Ninetta, that Andrea come to visit them at their home: «I believe you cannot doubt for a moment that if you came to visit us you would find here the warmest and most affectionate welcome. We are all old now – in the past 18 years many wounds have healed, leaving only a few traces of old scars, which do not take away the loving friendship that has become established over many years. We would all be very happy if you came.»

Costa's scars, however, were evidently still too painful, and he stubbornly resisted. He refused to visit her in the rich apartment where she received Turati; a couple of months later, Costa went, as usual, to pick up Ninetta from the concierge's office, but she was not there: «Turati was at the printer's, the maid does not know you and I have not been able to negotiate the stairs for several months», Anna apologised, thus making a passing reference to her illness, which had progressed to the point where she could hardly walk.

The following year she apologised again, but this time she was obliged to by Costa's criticism of her for not writing to him when the magazine *Avanti!* had attacked him personally: «No, you really do me an injustice if you believe that I am indifferent to what you are doing, that I have erased you from my memory and it is as if you were dead ... but believe me, if during the 19 years since our separation we have been like strangers to each other, it is largely because you chose to distance yourself.»

It was Costa who held a grudge and certainly not Anna, who broached the subject of Ninetta's engagement with trust and fondness. A few days after having sent the news to Turati, she wrote to Costa about how much she had suffered and the many sleepless nights she had spent worrying about Ninetta's future. The girl had already mentioned it to her father. «Only now do I fully feel the weight of the great responsibility of having a daughter to marry off. Let us hope it all goes well, that we two might still find a little happiness in the happiness of our daughter.» Costa, however, was offended by the fact that he had heard the news of the engagement from the press.

Anna apologised once again, although he had, in turn, offended her: «In the future, please spare me your offensive allusions, because they are unfair and undeserved. My dear, I wish you every happiness, and if you consider for one moment how much life, work and love I have given our daughter, you will be kinder to me, and despise me less.»

The press had pounced greedily on the news of the wedding, which they termed the «scandal of the century»<sup>12</sup> – Andreina Costa, the daughter of Andrea Costa and Anna Kuliscioff, was to have a church wedding; hints were made about conflicts with the bridegroom's family, who was said to have insisted on the ritual.

The news was published in the newspapers *L'Italia del Popolo* and *La Sera*, and the latter sent a reporter to interview Anna, who answered that the young couple were engaged and would be married, «in which form they will decide themselves». She commented: «In short, they do not even spare the two young people, who live outside of politics and can love each other like any other mortal. It seems like the Middle Ages with its caste divisions; a marriage between the descendants of two different castes must have been impossible, the difficulties insurmountable.»

<sup>12</sup> Letter from Anna Kuliscioff to Filippo Turati: «Milan, March 22, 1904, 6 pm. «My Dearest, to complete my Calvary the only thing missing was the Can Can of the newspapers. Yesterday, the paper *L'Italia del Popolo*, like a true scoundrel, with the obvious aim of vexing me, published with the news of Ninetta's engagement a mention of the Church wedding, in which they concealed their «poisoned arrow». Suzzi of the *Sera* sent me I don't know which of its reporters to find out how much of the news is true. I answered that the truth is that the two young people are engaged and will be married; in which form, however, they will decide themselves, and my daughter, at 22 years old, is free to act even against my own will. The *Sera* then published the simple facts without any political and religious frills. Things being as they are, Treves did not know how to behave, and yesterday evening he went out with Gavazzi and, upon the latter's insistence, in order to put an end to all the gossip, he published his own discreet short notice in the announcements. And this would have put an end to it all, had the *Corriere* not stupidly added two very ridiculous lines to the notice, i.e., that if it is a real Church wedding the victory will be of the Gavazzi family. In short, they do not even spare the two young people, who live outside of politics and can love each other like any other simple mortal. It seems like the Middle Ages with its caste divisions; a marriage between the descendants of two different castes must have been impossible, the difficulties insurmountable, and also a cause of violent conflict. However, God willing, I hope this incident marks the end of the more tiresome part of the whole affair, and that we will not have anything to regret. Everything is settled and at the end of August or in September, without pomp, without the whole array of relatives, without any bother, they will marry and be gone...».

Anna was indignant that her own unconventionality should be such a burden. She was not intimidated, however, either by the derisive printed material that circulated in abundance or by the explosions of anger or scorn from various politicians. Moreover, not only did she stand up to Andrea Costa, as we have seen, but she also showed her approval with an act of ostentatious provocation – she went to stay as a guest for a few days in the home of the new middle-class Christian family of Desio.

This was not an act of surrender, but rather an honest assault against the inflexibility of her old companions, who regarded all members of the middle classes as rogues and all Christians as reprobates. Anna had formed the opinion that if all industrialists were like the Gavazzis, there would be no need for Socialist revolution<sup>13</sup>.

Her daughter was of age, she loved the young man and, since she was neither a political woman nor an unbeliever, it was her right to marry «according to the forms generally required by families». «I would be neither a Socialist nor a good mother if I had exerted even the slightest influence to prevent the thing from happening. In my conscience I have not had a moment of doubt, nor any qualms whatsoever», Anna explained to Turati, and now that the «journalistic gossip is over» she characteristically drew philosophical conclusions – there must be a law of balance in the Universe, she suggested: «I have rebelled against everything and everyone; I have suffered greatly, I have sacrificed the best years of my youth, and now my daughter, in compensation, will respect all the laws and all the conventions.» She herself, meanwhile, would continue as always, and more than ever, to completely disregard what society had to say, and «desire only one thing – that Ninetta should be happy»<sup>14</sup>.

Costa was indignant at the idea of a church wedding, however, and spoke of Ninetta's betrayal and the failure of their Socialist principles. Anna replied with an admirable letter. «My dear Andreino», she began and, in a tone that was both affectionate and melancholy, and

<sup>13</sup> The 1891 encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*, on the subject of the working class, had enlightened many Christian industrialists and opened up new possibilities for the workers. The Gavazzi family had taken this message to heart, as Luigi himself was later to express in writing just two months before his death: «...Only if the employer cares for the soul of his own worker can he claim to have fulfilled his duty towards him. Those who limit themselves to simply utilising the merchandise of labour forget that man is not a machine, but an inseparable combination of body and soul, and that it is not possible to have relations of interest with our own kind if we disregard their moral aspect ...».

<sup>14</sup> Letter from Anna Kuliscioff to Filippo Turati: «Milan, March 24, 1904, 5:30 pm – My Dear, do not think that I feel at all belittled by the fact that Ninetta must have a Church wedding. If frontline Socialists like Cassola, Schiavi, Pontremoli and others have done so, if politicians, Freemasons, Anti-clericalists and Republicans, like Barzilai, have done so, why should a girl who is of age, who loves a young man, who is neither a political woman nor an unbeliever, not have the right to marry according to the forms generally required by families?

I would be neither a Socialist nor a good mother if I had exercised even the slightest influence to prevent the thing from happening. In my conscience I have not had a moment of doubt, nor any qualms whatsoever. I should also tell you that, if Luigi Gavazzi's family had firmly opposed it, he would have waited for a year and, without any funds at all, the two would have married anyway, even in Church, banking their future on his own work. However, as I say, it is all settled, the most clericalist of the relatives send their blessings to the young couple, and the journalistic gossip is over. Tell Pantaleoni that I send many thanks, and tell him also that he must be a good father. Sacchi wrote me a letter, like the good friend he is, saying that I should not have any qualms. Poor Sacchi! Did he think me so petty that I could sacrifice the girl out of selfishness? And what do I care about what the world may say? In my entire life I have never cared, and now I care less than ever. I desire only one thing – Ninetta's happiness. Besides, I believe there must be a law of balance in the Universe – I have rebelled against everything and everyone, and I have suffered greatly. I have sacrificed the best years of my youth, and now my daughter, in compensation, will respect all the laws and all the conventions. Such is life – we seem to soar up in who knows what flights, and then we realise that we are advancing very slowly. I send you many, many kisses, Anna.»

with the rationality and patience commonly used in dealing with a contentious child, she explained that «we must convince ourselves that we are not our children and that they want to live their own lives, as we ourselves did in our own time». The sadness was not caused by the small incident of the church wedding, but by the fact that «our daughter does not have a rebellious soul, nor a combative spirit. She is a poor, good girl; kind, quite intelligent, affectionate, made for family life and for having children of her own.»

In 1898, when Anna was in prison awaiting trial, Andreina had made a vow to the Madonna so that her mother would not be convicted; she herself, therefore, had not been concerned about the betrayal of her own conscience or the duty of coherence, she was only worried about disappointing her mother. Anna, on the other hand, had not believed such a marriage was even remotely possible, «not because of the girl, but due to the bad luck that I brought her as a reprobate mother rejected by respectable people». When at last the problems were settled, in speaking with her daughter about the church wedding, Anna had repeated her aversion towards all the formalities of marriage. «In point of fact, however, I am more repelled by the commercial act of civil weddings, seeing that, in church weddings, at least for a moment, one has the poetic feeling of a fusion of the souls.»

Andreina had never been observant, religiously. According to her mother, however, «As good, solid Socialists we must also respect the will and individuality of our children.» Anna believed that in this way she was fulfilling her duty as a mother, in love and respect for her daughter, and she did not regard her choices as representing either a betrayal or a failure. Here we have the complete expression of Anna's character, with her contradictions, her anarchic rebelliousness and her spiritual sympathies. In particular, however, we have a picture of a woman with both a heart and an intellect, who respected the freedom of others and of her own daughter above all, and sought to make the girl's decision as easy as possible – she was not to be held to any ideals except the education she had been given, and Andrea was wrong to be troubled, «because, even if Ninetta is not the image of ourselves, she is, nevertheless, a good and clever girl».

With great serenity, and, indeed, with a touch of irony when referring Turati's opinion, Anna revealed the desperation she had felt, while showing that in her approach to life she was still as zealous as ever. She knew that, in view of social, family and religious prejudices, it would have been very unlikely for a young man from a middle class family to marry Ninetta «due to the presumed offences of her mother, who blasted society on every level».

This awareness often caused her to wonder whether «it would not have been more honest of me, for the sake of Ninetta, to do away with myself. And my state of mind was such that only one fact, as Filippo told me, held me back from doing something very stupid, and this was that in so doing I would leave Ninetta alone».

Thus Anna, in a more dispassionate key, spoke of her past torments, illustrating her cheerful familiarity with Turati and showing clearly that Ninetta could count only on her mother. Above all, however, she gives Costa, who tended to behave like a tyrannical father, an important lesson on how to be a parent.

Anna came through the episode with head held high, her secular Socialist dignity unimpaired, and she felt a mother's joy for the happiness of her daughter, regardless of the fact that she had been blessed by a priest.

Ninetta's marriage seemed to bring Anna a certain amount of serenity. However, while she felt at peace as a mother, in the same period the jealousy she experienced as a woman was causing her a different type of suffering, and no less acute. This was perhaps the cause of a further decline in her health during 1904. Most of the time, in fact, after her morning *toilette*, she would return to bed, where she read and wrote, and in the afternoon received her closest friends. When Turati was in Rome for parliamentary sessions her life was peaceful, but also restricted.

Ninetta often kept her company and Anna was heartened by her daughter's well-being and happiness. Grandchildren soon made their appearance; Ninetta and her husband, in fact, as good Catholics, had five children in rapid succession<sup>15</sup>. The first was a boy, Guido; the second was a girl, born in the summer of 1907 and named Anna Maria after her grandmother and, in December 1908, a third child was born, also a girl, who was named Ernestina. Anna, whose health had improved, often went to visit her daughter, and to Desio as well.

She was a very affectionate grandmother. Although exempt from all material tasks (due to her precarious health and the wealth that surrounded her daughter, who had at her disposal nannies and maids), she showed a doctor's concern about the weight and the appetites of her grandchildren and, above all, when they were a little older and began to speak a few words, she began to establish relationships with them. Like all grandmothers, this fair-haired Socialist told them fairytales from her distant homeland and taught them nursery rhymes in Russian and even in the Milanese dialect.

At fifty years of age, in writing to Costa (who was by this time seriously ill) to give him news of the birth of his second granddaughter, Anna gave a brief outline of her life. All bitterness had disappeared and, in the sorrow of knowing how pain-stricken, sad and discontent he was, she longed to be able to «transmit to you a little of my own rosy sunset».

Since Ninetta had ceased being an unhappy misfit and had found the love of a good, affectionate and hard-working young man, since she was «surrounded by a particularly admirable family, who love her as their own daughter, I assure you that my soul has found peace».

«I neither desire nor expect anything more in life, I will die serene in the hope that our daughter's life will be smooth and happy, as it has been in these three years of marriage. I have wept much in the course of my life and now, at 50, I feel I have arrived at a safe haven, a shel-

---

<sup>15</sup> From a letter by Anna Kuliscioff to Filippo Turati; «Milan, February 10, 1913; 6:30 pm – My Dearest, today was a Spring-like day, and perhaps partly for this reason the fever and the malaise of the past few days left me. I was especially glad because Ninetta and Luigi came today for lunch without their children, like two newlyweds, and it would have been too demoralising to show myself to them with an indecently gaunt and sad face. I think they will leave for Rome on Wednesday evening, even though Ninetta is not at all well, being well on the way, poor thing, to giving birth to her fifth child. Ah! I do not know what is better – a husband who loves his wife, or one who seeks amusement elsewhere. Certainly, for the woman it is a disadvantage in either case. Perhaps, though, if health and means permit it, the *rara avis* husband is the best.»



ter from the storm that I hope will never again strike my little corner, and my much-damaged ship will have only to sink quietly down to where it will feel nothing more. Perhaps, however, I who believe in the afterlife will, after all, continue to follow all your affairs.»

In entering the Gavazzi household, therefore, Andreina had, in a sense, to abjure from the philosophy and the education with which she had been raised.

Before her wedding, out of love for her future husband, she joined the Catholic Church, and with Luigi's help she became a devout, faithful and very religious practising Christian.

She was baptised by Cardinal Ferrari on May 24, 1904 – not as an unavoidable condition of her marriage with Luigi, but rather as the providential ambition of her young soul in search of God.

«It was an act of Providence», wrote Andreina at the time, «that made me aware of the emptiness that had been created around me, and in my soul. Now I am happy – and I believe Mother is also.»

Luigi was away in America, but the long letters from Andreina reached him with the vibrant confidence of a love which was undaunted by any obstacle or delay.

It was in this period that the girl had her first meeting with Luigi's parents – his father Egidio, «a man of exceptional common sense and an even more exceptional good nature» and his mother Giuseppina, the meeting with whom Andreina herself described in a letter to Luigi, dated April 7th.

This hand-written description, from its opening words, expressed clearly the charming freshness of its author: «My dear, dear love, my Luigi, do you know who is watching me and smiling with an expression that is so sweet and good? The little portrait of your mother, that she herself gave me. Let me first say that I am happy and already I love her very much, and then I will tell you everything.»

Don Pietrino Stoppani, the good and wise priest who prepared her for baptism, was the mediator of the meeting; a note from him, received the evening before, informed her that Luigi's mother wanted to see her and make her acquaintance: «Where, how? With Luigi far away, it is no easy matter. Let us do this – tomorrow, Thursday (April 7th), at around 10 am, mamma Gavazzi will be in the Church of Carmine, in the pews up near the altar... Go there, and as you will be looking for each other it will be very easy to recognise her. Note that it is Mrs. Peppina who arranged this meeting – the impression should be that it is by chance... mamma Gavazzi will be alone, and you should also be alone. If a mother and daughter are to always have a good understanding, they will understand each other best in the house of God!»

After transcribing this note, Andreina continued: «I cannot tell you how troubled and moved I was by this note; I thought also that you would write to me the same day saying that I should not meet any of your family without you... but mamma is above everything and everyone, and I followed my impulse and the advice of my mother, and this morning I went. I arrived first, excited and nervous as I have been few times in my life. As soon as she entered, I knew it was her, as she looked at me with her kind, smiling face, and I went to forward meet her and she kissed me. I could not say a word, I was so moved that I had a lump in my

throat. She spoke to me, telling me many kind and affectionate things that I could not even repeat to you now. But she gave me especially great pleasure because she mentioned with my poor dear mother kindly, and told me that in the future she would like to meet her. We spoke of you, of us; in short, I am happy, it seems that you now will not have to face any more changes of fortune, for the two souls who love you most are united and with you always.»

The conclusion of this story could not have been any other than that which Andreina hastens to add: «My mother left this morning happy about this latest event, and full of admiration and goodwill for the commendable way in which yours has behaved.»

From the day they first met, there was always a great mutual understanding between the middle-class, conservative Gavazzi mother and the socialist revolutionary Kuliscioff mother. Although they had such different characters, the basic generosity of spirit that distinguished both their personalities prevented any social, religious or historical differences (which seemed to set themselves against interests and life) from creating a barrier between them<sup>16</sup>.

The couple married on September 3, 1904, and theirs was indeed a match made in heaven. After the wedding, Andrea did not want to see his beloved Andreina ever again, as she had dared to marry a member of the middle class. From her letters, however, it is clear that the two continued to correspond. On January 9, 1905, for example, Andreina wrote to him that she hoped to «soon make you a grandfather». However, «grandfather» never recognised himself as such, and although he used to send a card now and again to his little Gavazzi grandchildren (addressed, for example, to «little Guido»), he was always careful to sign them simply «Andrea».

Turati's attitude was different. Andreina's children had the same respect and affection for him as for their grandmother, and he himself, almost as if to compensate for Andrea Costa's rejection, loved to refer to himself as their «grand-dad», while they, as good Milanese children, affectionately called him *Filippin*<sup>17</sup>.

Andreina's eldest son, Don Egidio, Abbot of Subiaco, in an interview about his parents and

<sup>16</sup> Before meeting the Gavazzis, however, Kuliscioff, in a letter to Andrea Costa, stated that Luigi had had to «face all the thunderbolts of the blackest kinship of Milanese Conservatism».

<sup>17</sup> Turati remained always very close to the children of Andreina, as can be seen in the following letter from him to Anna Kuliscioff: «Courmayeur, Sunday, September 9, 1923, am – «My dearest – We all arrived home safe and sound yesterday at different hours of the afternoon. The eldest ones were not content with the climb up to the Torino Refuge (three good hours of acrobatics on the loose, slippery rock, involving the combined use of feet, hands and *alpenstock*, and especially the pulmonary bellows). At seven in the morning they set off again on their climb with a *porteur* and 36 metres of rope; the little ones and the old folks more cautiously settled for the 3,234 metre altitude of the Refuge and then climbed back down. As they predicted, however, although the weather was beautiful (Heaven help us had been a downpour!), the descent was much harder than the climb, with much uncertainty as to which direction to take to avoid getting stuck on some rock without being able to move either up or down. At a certain *pavillon* along the way, after a little rest, as my feet were making me see stars in the middle of the day, evidently due to a footwear defect (next time I must wear those thick, double socks like the guides wear), Nina and the little ones, after trying in vain to persuade me to stay the night at the *pavillon*, which I proudly refused to do, went ahead of me along the last stretch of the descent and I decided to follow at my own pace, even if it meant arriving home after nightfall. However, things went better than I expected, and at 19.30 – the canonical hour of the evening meal – I was already within sight of Lazzei and met Gi along the road, who had acted from the start as communications officer and came to greet the latecomer and to see how I was getting on. In actual fact, I was full of life from head to ankles, but fossilised from the ankles down, and the only problem was that my feet – such a despicable part of the body – take on in these circumstances a crucial importance. After a nice, warm footbath I read your express letter, which was here waiting for me, with all the political and personal news. I had the impression, in fact, that I was hearing from you every day because, not having slept a wink the whole night between Friday and Saturday (imagine, at such a low altitude!), those two days were like one single day to me. Yet up there one does not feel fatigue, neither sleepiness nor appetite; one lives on water, cognac, coffee, mulled wine and, at the most, a little chocolate.

grandparents, had this to say: «I never knew grandfather Andrea. I was five years old when he died, but he was on bad terms with my mother – he had never forgiven her for having married a member of the middle class. We children had always considered Filippo Turati our grandfather – in Milan we lived quite near each other, with grandmother and Turati in the Gallery, and we in Via Brera.

My parents met at university. My mother was enrolled in medicine at Bologna; my father was studying chemistry. Mother was living in Milan with my grandmother at the time. When she was born, grandfather Andrea registered her in the registry office of Imola as his daughter with a single woman, whose name he did not give. When, a year later, my grandparents split (they had never married), grandmother took my mother and went to live in Milan. My mother skipped the fifth year of high school and later, in 1898, when grandmother was imprisoned, she fell ill. When my mother became engaged to my father, granny wrote a very affectionate letter.

Grandfather, however, never forgave her, and only when he was on his deathbed, in 1910, did he consent to see her. Granny, who had always remained on good terms with him, wrote him a letter that is now kept by a niece of mine who lives in Siena. Essentially, she reproached him for being too rigid. I seem to recall that she said: «Your attitude towards Ninetta does not seem to me that of a good Socialist... If I have failed as a mother, it is not a malicious failure... I would never have believed it possible that Ninetta would marry, because respectable people regard me as a reprobate. I even considered doing away with myself for the sake of freeing Ninetta...». It was a beautiful letter, full of the noblest feelings. My grandmother

---

Everything else is repugnant. *Die Tränen und die Senfzer – sie kamen bintennach!*, which is to say that the bruise feels worse the day after. I am, however, much less bruised than Ninetta, who, having chosen to act the young girl with the children, now finds it practically impossible to sit comfortably, while for me the only problem is in sitting down and standing up. By tomorrow the bruises will also be almost gone and so all's well that ends well. I hope I have not brought lice down with me, which are one of the common delights of Alpine refuges; however, I washed and groomed myself very carefully without finding any traces of other animals besides yours truly. Today we are having a well-deserved day of rest and we will have at the most an excursion to the county seat. Resting, after a two thousand metre climb and another two thousand back down, is in itself an extremely pleasant occupation and it will be a lot if I manage to read the papers, which I found piled up upon my return, along with your express letter and postcards from Pè in Alassio and Brocchi in Cavalese. I am afraid, however, that this was probably my last expedition to the high mountains, as it is very unlikely that, approaching seventy as I am, I will have again the occasion and the energy for such escapades. The only mishap of the excursion was suffered by my trousers, which will return to Milan with a number of tears made by the rocks, upon which I happened many times to, how may I put it, involuntarily «take rests»; the blame for the tears, however, if not the rests, is Targetti's, who sold me such flimsy fabric. Thank goodness you put an extra pair of trousers in my suitcase!

Here the weather continues to be splendid, but I am beginning to think about coming home. The kids would like me to stay until they leave, but there really is no reason. However, I think that on Tuesday or Wednesday at the latest, when I am completely rested, I could take the train home, since we shall not be considering any more long hikes. I might perhaps go by way of the mountains, rather than by road, as far as the Small St. Bernard Pass (which I have never seen) and then from there directly back to Aosta, in which case I will come home one day later than planned. I should then have to send my luggage from here to Aosta to await my arrival. I also believe that this supplementary mountain experience has, on the whole, done me good, and Ghiffa will later complete our holidays. Tomorrow we will go and find you the purest honey in the Alps, which has its source much further down in the valley..

Nina is determined to add her half-a-sheet, even though her arms, shoulders and hands ache, and then I will go with Anna Maria to the post.

Ernesta is practising hard at the piano so as not to neglect her duty, although she also must really be dying to let her muscles rest, but these kids, lucky things, are made of rubber! Our own rubber resembles those old gas pipes that are cracked everywhere. The worst thing is, as you pointed out to Angelica, that the gas itself also diminishes and soon the pipes will bring neither light nor warmth. I hug you with all the tenderness that my bruises will allow. Your Filippo.»

was not a believer, but unconsciously she was religious; in 1898, when she was arrested, she made vows to the Madonna. My father's family, however, always welcomed her in their home, even though when my father was considering getting engaged to my mother, they had tried to dissuade him by sending him to the United States.

We had a very affectionate relationship with Turati, and regarded him as our grandfather. To mother he had, in fact, always behaved as a father. During the days of his flight, in 1926, I continued to go to his house even after he had left. He had pretended to be ill, and I made a show of going to visit him, but, in truth, he had already been taken away in a car, after escaping through an attic and out of another door in Via Foscolo – number 1 instead of number 3. Then, with Parri and some others, he had taken a boat from Savona to Corsica.

I have a photograph of Turati with the dedication «From grandfather to the grandchildren». Turati was an angelic man. Even when mother married, he did nothing to oppose her. I went to visit him in Paris in 1931; I had by this time decided to take my vows, and when I told him he only asked me to think about it. «We change in life», he said. He was only afraid I might regret it later.

Grandfather was an atheist, but his father, who in Imola was known as *Piròn*, had been a sanctimoniously religious man – he served at Mass until he was 14. Then he met Carducci and changed his mind.

I came here to Subiaco in 1952 as coadjutor to the Abbot, and when he died six and a half years ago I took his place.

When I arrived, the Socialist party printed in time for the elections posters with a picture of Grandfather and, underneath, the words: «The grandfather of the Abbot coadjutor». Cardinale Testa once asked me how two such upright and intelligent people as my grandparent could have professed agnosticism. I answered with a hypothesis: perhaps divine providence determines that the effects of redemption are carried in all directions. If my grandparents had lived an entirely Christian life, they would have deviated fatally from their great social concentration. Turati was completely agnostic. In his library I found, underlined on many pages, the *Dottrina cattolica* by Cardinal Capececiaturo. He had concluded his study with the words «It is higher than I ».

Likewise, Andreina's daughter, Sister Maria Angela, thus remembers her grandmother: «She was an extremely intelligent and extraordinary woman. She had graduated in medicine like mother and myself, did you know? Before, she had enrolled in Zurich in engineering, and then she graduated in medicine in Naples.

No, she was not a believer, unfortunately, but she did a great deal of charitable work – she visited the poor in their homes, in Milan, and she has left behind her a good memory.

I recall a portrait in pastel that we had in Desio – I remember that the artist once came to touch it up by hand. The face was kind, but serious. Her blonde hair stood out against the rose-coloured background.

When I was born, grandmother was already with Turati. He was a fine man – we called him *Filippìn*. To Mother he was a true father.»

In 1912 Luigi, who was by this time suffering with gastric problems, was in Rome with his Ninetta. In the eyes of Turati he appeared extremely affectionate with his wife, but he was often disabled due to his illness, for which he occasionally spent periods of time resting in Rapallo and sought the advice of many doctors.

In Rome the couple went to visit Bissolati, who invited them for lunch in the house where Ninetta lived during her university years, and they often met with Turati, who was very happy to see Ninetta and her husband and spend some time together.

After a farewell lunch and a ride in the carriage, Turati finally saw them off. He was very affectionate with them and concerned about Luigi, who did not seem to have benefited from their trips and had revealed a kind of repulsion for the museums – Filippo thought his ailment was of a nervous nature.

As always, Anna was busy with the magazine *Critica Sociale* and with her political activities, but she was always faithful to her duties as a good grandmother.

At Christmas she received the season's greetings from her friends and went to shop for Christmas presents; she would go out in the cold of Milan to buy a little present for Ninetta, whose birthday was on December 8<sup>th</sup> and then to Desio to celebrate and play with her *ratitt* («little mice»). Guido had to be comforted because he had had two teeth pulled out, and little Anna Maria went around the house looking for grandfather *Filippin* behind the doors, perplexed at not seeing him with her grandmother. Anna was moved by her attachment to Turati and Anna Maria became increasingly her favourite.

Then she returned to Milan, where the Christmas cleaning began, the maids prepared the house for the festivities and everyone awaited the arrival of the MP on Christmas Eve.

In the summer of 1913 Ninetta moved to Varazze for Luigi's treatment, and the Turati-Kuliscioff couple moved with them. Anna, in fact, had been prescribed sun-baths for her bone tuberculosis, which by this time had almost completely robbed her of the use of her leg; so she spent long hours sunbathing on the terrace of their rented villa or on the beach, where she amused herself with her grandchildren, of which there were now five. She loved the sea, even though she could not bathe; she would become «golden-brown and painted in the face with tousled, still-blonde hair».

Turati returned to Milan at the beginning of September but Anna stayed longer, knitting, in the company of Ninetta and some friends, gloves, balaclavas and socks «which can be made tubular rather than with a heel, because then, when a hole appears on one side, they can simply be turned around and they are fine!»

Here we see Anna returning to her domestic occupations, a woman amongst women, skilful as in all other activities and pleased to be able to participate, through her knitting, in the life of the other women alongside her Ninetta, for whom she had once sewn little dresses and stockings.

The weather in Varazze continued to be splendid and the sun helped Anna's phlebitis; she did her four hours of heliotherapy every day, when the wind was too strong to allow knitting. Her leg,

in fact, improved dramatically, so that she was able to go for walks now and again with the rest of the company, although she found it very tiring and had to take a carriage home, to the great joy of the children, Guido and Anna Maria, who were allowed to go with their grandmother.

Despite the war, Anna was fairly serene, and saddened only by the poor health of her young son-in-law, whose kidney disease was gradually worsening.

A serious form of chronic nephritis forced Luigi, with his family, to move to the milder climate of San Remo, where they lived for a few years in the Clotilde villa.

The children spent five years of their childhood and adolescence in San Remo, where, after thirteen years of marriage, Luigi died, leaving behind his Andreina and their five children – Guido, the eldest, was not yet 12, and Pietro, the youngest, was only three.

Andreina was very much in love with Luigi. She later confessed that on the night he died she prayed for the Lord to take all five children, but to leave her her husband. This was, of course, just an expression of her desperation<sup>18</sup>.

Anna Kuliscioff went now and again to spend a few days with the young family, first in Desio and later in San Remo. She had immense respect for her son-in-law, not merely for Andreina's sake, but because of his personal qualities, which she was quick to perceive.

A short article on the problems of industrial production, written in Luigi's «newspaper», helps us to see on what level the active Socialist was able to relate to the practising Christian, Luigi.

The uncompromising evangelical programme he proposed aimed at the same goal – moral elevation of the people – to which Anna was dedicated in heart and mind. Naturally, the language and terminology used were different in each case, but there was no denying the possibility of uniting in a single vision for the good of the people. It was not insignificant, in fact, that Andreina wrote in her diary that Luigi would have given his life for Turati and Anna's conversion to Christianity. We have a glimpse of Anna's admiration for Luigi, meanwhile, in the text of a telegram that she sent to her grandson Guido, who had applied to change his name to that of his father, after his death in April: «April 21, 1917 – To dear heir named Luigi most heartfelt wishes may you be faithful continuer of father's superior virtues. Kiss mamma and your brothers and sisters. Granny Kuliscioff.»

At the beginning of March 1917 Luigi's health, which had been poor for years, had taken a turn for the worse. Anna had hastened to San Remo, despite the cold and unsettled weather, which had always been very dangerous for her own health.

---

<sup>18</sup> Andreina recorded the last moments in her diary, in the form of a dialogue with Luigi, so that their echo might be transmitted to the children as a Christian witness.

After having spoken of the confession he asked to make in the afternoon of April 20, 1917, the rosary begun together, the Last Rites and the long night spent in prayer, hand in hand, she continued: «Towards morning your condition seemed to worsen. Good Father Mignacco came and gave us communion – our last communion together! It was the seal of our earthly union, the prelude to the eternal union of our souls ... At around two o'clock in the afternoon, one last terrible convulsion took you away forever. During this time I left you, because I heard the heartbroken cries of the children, who had realised that you were suffering. I should not have left you! ... Yet I had felt a force that tore me away from your bedside and took me to them, their only remaining support... poor support... Do you remember, children? In that little dining room of Villa Bracco, to calm your weeping, to try to ease your pain, I made you kneel down and we prayed and prayed... Thank You, Lord, for the strength you gave me in that moment – from whom, if not from You, could it have come?»

Luigi died on April 21, leaving Andreina, only 36, and five small children.

The poor young widow was distraught; she tried not to cry so as not to upset the children, but not even her mother, who offered her consolation «timidly», was able to relieve her grief<sup>19</sup>.

Although she allowed herself to be comforted by her mother, Andreina continued to repeat: «but he is no longer here»; poor Andreina – she had staked everything on being a wife and a mother, choosing, in spite of her upbringing and her education, in spite of her great admiration for Anna, the life of a normal woman of the time.

Now she found herself alone. She still had her family, her children to raise and, fortunately, a good financial situation. There were also her husband's parents, who loved her as their own daughter, her brothers and sisters-in-law, who helped her and kept her company, and she still had her religion to lean on – the religion she had adopted as an adult and out of love for the very devout Luigi, but which without him may perhaps have seemed a senseless duty.

From this time on, Andreina was no longer able to be a comfort to her mother; she was continually busy and remained shut up inside her own mourning for years to come. She was as devoted as ever to her mother and always looked after her lovingly, but she had about her an air of perpetual sadness, so much so that the worthy Turati, although he loved her dearly, was somewhat averse to this eternal mourning, expressing his own realistic approach to life with the following statement: «One adapts to everything in life when one is young and has responsibilities and worries. The problem of remaining alone is much greater for

<sup>19</sup> From a letter by Anna Kuliscioff to Filippo Turati: «San Remo, April 27, 1917, 2.30 pm. – My Dearest, ... Regarding your coming to San Remo, Ninetta would prefer you to come after May 8th, because then I should be able to return with you. However, there is still time and we will discuss it again. Today the poor girl is very downcast; she does not weep, so as not to upset the children, but she weeps inwardly, which is more painful. Consolation? Yesterday I tried timidly to tell her that perhaps with time and with the habit of getting through the household chores by herself she will also feel less frightened by the loss of the great support she had. While she admitting that in time things may well become easier, she repeated: «But he is no longer here» and it is true; who could ever take the place of a heart that was so devoted to her? In some of her memories he placed her on a pedestal, saying that he could not thank Providence enough for having given him a companion in life like his Andreina. Perhaps, in raising her children, who are now showing great promise, she may find a little comfort, but in the next five or six years the poor girl will have to carry many burdens and responsibilities. For now she will stay in San Remo, as she feels this was Luigi's wish; then she will try to decide what to do. Now she will have the nuisance and the fatigue of the move: the *corvée* will begin in the second half of May, when I have already left. Luigi's mother, however, promised that one of her daughters will come here to help when it is time to arrange the house. ...

Today there was the funeral in Desio and perhaps partly for this reason, although she does not say so, Ninetta is also rather unwell physically...»

From another letter: «April 30, 1917, 5.00 p.m.: – ... Poor Ninetta has not a minute to rest all day long; however, when letters arrive or something else reminds her of her tragedy, there are moments of pure desolation. Besides the great burdens and responsibilities that life holds in store for her, I am afraid that she is feeling sad about giving up all the things that make life a little happier. Fortunately for her, Luigi's family loves her as if she were a daughter to her mother-in-law and a sister to her brothers and sisters-in-law. Let us hope that the future will ease all the suffering, and that she may find a little solace in her enormous tragedy. Poor girl! My heart breaks for her, and I am desolate in my impotence to be able to bring her consolation at least for a few hours of these sad and sorrowful days...»

From another letter: «May 15, 1917, 3.30 p.m. – ... I shall be very glad to return home, but I can already foresee what a heartbreak it will be to leave poor Ninetta here alone. I read her the few lines you addressed to her, but she is not comforted by the thought that she is still young and can still find many ways to live, if not in good cheer, at least more serenely. In fact, she envies us, because our downward road is shorter and therefore also the time to our passage into the afterlife, in which she believes fervently and which is perhaps her only strength. I cannot tell you how it tears me apart to see her so anguished. Let us hope that with time and the comfort that the children bring her, who are truly as good and precious as children of their age are able to be ...»

From another letter by Anna Kuliscioff to Filippo Turati: «Milan, October 17, .1917, 4.30 p.m. – Ninetta sent me an enormous Persian carpet as a memory of Luigi who, in his will, with affectionate words to me, asked that I be given something to remember him by. Poor Ninetta! The day after tomorrow she will leave, and I cannot tell you how sad I am.»



In memory of Luigi Gavazzi.

old folks like us. What can we do in the world?...». Thus he gave his own somewhat uncertain judgement, less a month after the death of Luigi. He was thinking of his own plight and, especially, was afraid for Anna's health, who at the time was trying to be strong for her daughter, although she was grief-stricken herself: «Poor girl! My heart breaks for her, and I am desolate in my impotence to give her consolation at least for a few hours of the sad and sorrowful days.» And, in fact, weakened by grief, Anna became ill with influenza, or perhaps bronchitis, which, in her state of health was a serious condition.

Turati, who had again left for Rome, alarmed by the vague news he had received from Ninetta, lived «with my heart in water and my suitcase ready»; in spite of the situation, however, he had retained his sense of humour: «you really should live with supplies of holy water in your pocket, as

the Milanese say, so we will not have to worry about you.» «The common cold, which for us is but a misdemeanour, is in your case a crime of high treason.»

Anna could not even write, and Ninetta kept her in bed and warm for as long as possible, advising her not to get up even to go to the bathroom.

Her convalescence was slow, partly because she regretted leaving her daughter in such a despondent state. However, Anna also had to learn to not speak of Andreina and her grief to Turati, because he could not abide sadness and was not to be troubled with other people's problems.

In mid-May Turati came to San Remo to take her home and Anna returned sadly to Milan, where she was soon to be left alone in her fine, large house, because Filippo, as always, was called back to Rome by his parliamentary duties. Andreina then returned to Desio, where her mother made increasingly frequent trips to see her.

In Desio the absolute silence was broken only by the laughter of the children, who were now adolescents and filled the house with liveliness and good cheer.

Their grandmother lavished on them both her affection and her great teaching capacities – she was able to speak with all of them about their personal interests and there was nothing that she could not teach, from the lyric poetry of Manzoni to mathematics.

Ninetta continued to isolate herself. She added just a touch of colour to the black of her mourning clothes, partly to please her mother, but she had put on weight and paid little attention to her appearance. She found comfort only in her religion and her children. Despite the great difference between them, the two women loved each other unreservedly and enjoyed each other's company.

In 1933 Andreina's other dearly-loved mother, Giuseppina Gavazzi, also passed away. With her death, and with the deaths of Andrea Costa (1910), Egidio Gavazzi (1910), her husband Luigi (1917),



her mother Anna Kuliscioff (1925) and Filippo Turati (1932), all the earthly roots of Andreina's life had dried up. Her own tree, however, lasted another 26 years until the age of 78, full of that «light» which her mother found so enchanting and which was passed on generously to her five children, especially the first two, who were destined for the Benedictine and Carmelite cloisters.

The last decade of Andreina's life were characterised by the gradual deterioration of her health and the consequent refining of her spirit, as she broke off all contact with the world in a long, soul-enriching Calvary.

Having moved to Rome in 1950 with her daughter Ernestina, in the early hours of November 23, 1959 she died suddenly. The day before, her Benedictine son, the Abbot of Subiaco, had attended an audience that Pope John XXIII had granted to the seminary students of his diocese: «My mother is dying, Your Holiness», he told the Pope. «I would ask of you a special blessing for her.»

The blessing was duly given and Andreina's son managed to reach her in time to bring her the blessing before administering the last rites.

At the age of 78, the daughter of Andrea Costa and Anna Kuliscioff and the ward of Filippo Turati finally completed her long journey and was united with her God.

Her coffin was brought to Desio on November 25, 1959, and placed in the large hall of the ancient Gavazzi home which, 42 years earlier, had also housed her husband's.

The coffin was not surrounded by red carnations or flags, but lit candles were placed above the altar where her Benedictine son celebrated a Mass for her soul, while at the same time her Carmelite daughter wept and prayed in faraway Arezzo.

There was no «public glory» for Andreina, but rather the psalm-singing of the choirs, accompanying her mortal remains into the church and to her final resting-place in the cemetery of Desio. No political commemorations followed, even though the political world could not ignore the death of a daughter of the Socialist revolution. There was, however, the mourning of her family, of people both rich and poor, and universal tokens of appreciation for this Christian woman, wife and mother.

So she lived, and so she died, and so she lives on in memories – Andreina Costa Kuliscioff Gavazzi, the daughter born out of wedlock to two revolutionaries, and a woman who could perhaps be considered a saint.

Andrea Costa would never have dreamed that two of his grandchildren would one day take the habit and that one of his great-grand-daughters was to become a missionary nun – and yet they were all his direct descendants<sup>20</sup>.

The Benedictine and the Carmelite joined their respective orders with two valuable degrees in electro-technical engineering and medicine, while the nun became a missionary abroad, even giving up living in her own country.

---

<sup>20</sup> Sofia, the eldest of Egidia's five children, entered the probationship of the Little Sisters of Jesus; she later went to Turkey as a missionary.

This surge of piety and evangelism in the third generation is without doubt due to the concentration of religious feeling in Andreina and Luigi, which then erupted in their children, but also perhaps to a few stray corpuscles in the blood of Andrea Costa and Anna Kuliscioff, passed down to their descendants.

Andrea Costa, in fact, although not religious and a revolutionary, was an honest man and always admired in the Catholic Church its hosts of martyrs and missionaries; Anna, moreover, also faced persecution for her Socialist ideal of freedom and she also gave up her own homeland, which had passed in 1917 from the tyranny of the Tsars to the tyranny of the Bolsheviks.



Family photo of Andreina Gavazzi Costa Kuliscioff with her five children, published in the magazine *Gente* on February 8, 1963.

When Luigi died, on the main door of the Parish Church of San Siro and San Materno in Desio, where the funeral was held, there was written: «A death worthy of the saints».

### *A profile of Andreina*

Andreina was an angelic woman, who radiated love, affection and understanding. She lived her faith in an intelligent, sensitive and open-minded way, and succeeded alone in bringing up an extremely pious, model family with a profound and sincere faith. In Milan, in Via Brera where she lived, she often organised meetings/lessons with Father Genesio for family members (Franco Gavazzi and his wife Margherita, my parents, were regularly in attendance).

She also lived in Desio in the ancestral home of her father-in-law. Later, she bought a villa, again in Via San Pietro, where she settled down by herself. In 1952 she also had a house in Rome, where she could see Don Egidio more frequently.

Andreina was the «guardian» of Don Luigi Giussani, founder of the association Communion and Liberation. Don Giussani was from Desio. Angela, his mother, had worked in the Egidio & Pio Gavazzi Company. After she married she obeyed the wishes of her husband Beniamino, the youngest of twelve children, and left her job as, according to him, a woman's place was in the home, raising her children. She returned to work in 1938, however, again as a textile worker for the Gavazzi company, when an illness forced her husband to remain at home and she had to earn money to feed her family.

Andreina helped Don Giussani with his seminary studies, and he repaid her with «good reports and very high grades».

Andreina was part of the «Brotherhood» and, as Luigi's heir, was involved in the business activities of her brothers-in-law.

She died in Rome on November 23, 1959. From the diary of Franco Gavazzi, her nephew: «At one o'clock in the morning, in Via Lucchini no. 16, Rome, my very dear Aunt Andreina passed away. She was such a wonderful person that one truly feels a prayer for her soul is almost superfluous.

After suffering for several years with pernicious anaemia, she died a saintly death in the home of Ernestina Cerletti (her daughter), surrounded by all her children except Sister Maria Angela, as it is against the rules for her to leave the convent.»



Tombstone of Andreina Costa.

## **GUIDO GAVAZZI (1905-1990) (LUIGI FROM 1918 TO 1931; DON EGIDIO AFTER 1931)**

After living for two years in Milan, where Guido was born on August 23, 1905, his parents – Andreina Costa Kuliscioff and Luigi Gavazzi – moved to Desio, where his father ran the family factory. When the latter began to have health problems (1910) they moved to San Remo<sup>21</sup>.

Guido, therefore, spent his childhood in Desio and San Remo, where, in 1917, his father died an untimely death. After this, Guido decided to change his name (1918) to Luigi (Luigi II as he was known in the family).

In 1922, after Luigi graduated from high school, the family moved back to Desio for a year and then to Milan, residing at n.18 Via Brera.

Luigi graduated in electro-technical engineering from the Milan Polytechnic in 1927. He was an active member of the FUCI (Association of Italian Catholic University Students – founded in 1896).

Luigi had a great love for the mountains, and made frequent trips to the Aosta Valley with his sister Anna Maria and his brother Pietro.

### *The religious calling*

Immediately after graduating, in 1927, at the young age of 22, he was appointed manager of the Monteneve mine<sup>22</sup>.

Here he remained until 1931 when, on November 10th, he took the monk's habit and changed his name again – this time to Don Egidio, in memory of his father's father.

Some family members maliciously said that Guido's decision to become a monk was due partly to the solitary life he lived at Monteneve and partly to his unrequited love for a woman known only as the «Red Lady».

The following is his own account of the crucial events of his life: «I graduated in 1927 in Milan and then spent four years at a mine, of which Father was co-owner, near Brennero, between the valleys of Passiria and Ridanna. Here silver, zinc and lead were extracted. In 1931 I unexpectedly felt the call, so I left the mine and entered the monastery of San Giovanni, in Parma.

Perhaps I have never examined the circumstances that may have added their weight to the Lord's will. If I think about it, I remember that the mine was going through a slack period at the time, but this in itself was not a reason – I could always have worked at the silk mill in Desio, or at the Rossi Wool Manufacturing Company, in which we had a large share. It is a fact that, in those years, I led a secluded life, cut off from the world. The work, moreover, was dangerous. At the time I went up to work at the mine, I had my sights set on marriage



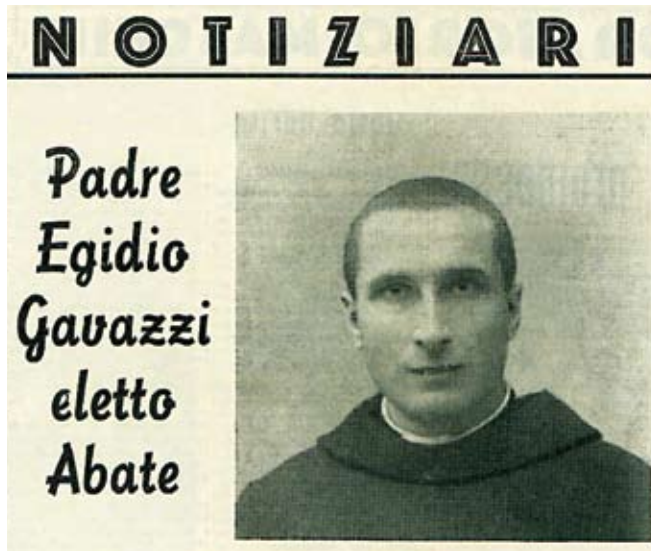
Andreina Costa with her son Guido Gavazzi (1905-1990).



A photo of Don Egidio Gavazzi.

<sup>21</sup> To the Bracco villa in Santa Clotilde.

<sup>22</sup> The Maiern mines in Alto Adige, between the valleys of Passiria and Ridanna (see chapter 10, Giuseppe Gavazzi, 1877-1949).



Another photo of Don Egidio Gavazzi.

Father Egidio Gavazzi, abbot and bishop, with Pope John XXIII at Subiaco (Rome) in 1960.



– there was a girl, but fortunately I was not compromised. Then, one day, there was a terrible accident, in which a lineman of the cable-way fell from a great height and broke his spine. I heard a voice from Heaven that told me: «This path is not yours; I will take care of this soul, but you will help me to save others». When I made my decision I had been fatherless for many years. My mother was left a widow with five children – two boys and three girls. Perhaps initially mother was a little troubled by my decision, but later she was happy – she did nothing but thank the Lord. She was a very pious woman. It is true that in this period I was rather the man of the family – my father had died of nephritis when I was eleven and a half; at twelve I was already going to the bank, looking after the business. Later my place was taken by my brother, eight years my junior and also an engineer.»

In actual fact, in around 1930 he met and placed himself under the spiritual guidance of Abbot Emanuele Caronti, who had been recommended to him by his sister Anna Maria.

In 1931, therefore, he entered the Benedictine Monastery of San Giovanni in Parma<sup>23</sup>, where in 1935 he became a professed monk, and on November 13<sup>24</sup>, 1935 he was ordained into the priesthood. In taking the habit, he gave up all worldly possessions, passing on all his wealth to the Abbey<sup>25</sup>.

When he was ordained, he chose to celebrate one of his first Masses among the miners at Monteneve. There he was responsible for restoring the little church of Monteneve to its ancient splendour. During the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council he met several times with Monsignor Gargitter, Bishop of Bressanone, and urged him to visit «his miners». This he did, managing also to pass on news to Don Egidio more or less steadily.

Those who met the monk Don Egidio all declared they had never seen anyone so happy. His was a true calling and he felt it profoundly; consequently, he virtually radiated joy.

His circumspection and his virtue came immediately to the attention of his superiors, who appointed him Master of Novices, and later Consultor.

In 1944, following the tradition of his ancestors, Don Egidio also had a taste of prison, thanks to the zeal of a Fascist police commissioner who, dur-

<sup>23</sup> On November 3<sup>rd</sup> the whole family accompanied him to his new «headquarters». That evening, his mother Andreina wrote to him: «I do not want this day to end without telling you ... all the love I feel in my heart for you. In your good-heartedness and your closeness you have always been my consolation and my comfort ... And even now it is you who brings me the greatest consolation that a mother may receive. Do not think about my tears; be assured that I am happy, happy to give you to the Lord ... My dear Luigi, I feel already your prayers helping me; continue, please, because I do not yet measure up to you. I strive, however, with my whole soul, to be always closer to our Lord and to you, my dear son. I embrace you with all my love: Mamma.»

<sup>24</sup> The date in which he also celebrated his first Mass.

<sup>25</sup> This amounted to 30 million lira.

ing a routine search «discovered», on the table of his cell in the Abbey of Parma, suspicious and «extremely dangerous» family papers, which consisted of several letters written by the Socialist Filippo Turati (who, at that point, had been dead for thirteen years).

In March 1947 he was transferred from Parma to Subiaco as Order Consultor for Italy (a board of 4 members of which the general abbot, who was then Monsignor Caronti, held council for the governance of the order).

On November 10, 1951 he was elected coadjutor abbot with the right to succession in the Subiaco monastery, in the province of Rome (erected on the site where St. Benedict had his first mystical experience) and on January 3, 1952, again in Subiaco, he was «blessed» as Abbot and, in 1964, as Ordinary Bishop, and as such became part of the Council.

Mother Andreina shared in both the honour and the anxiety of her son with an extremely tactful and meaningful gesture, which she communicated to her Carmelite daughter in these terms: «My dear daughter, now I must leave you because I want to go this morning to Abbot Caronti to take him an amethyst of Grandmother Anna, which I hope may be useful for Don Egidio's ring. I would be glad, you understand why...»

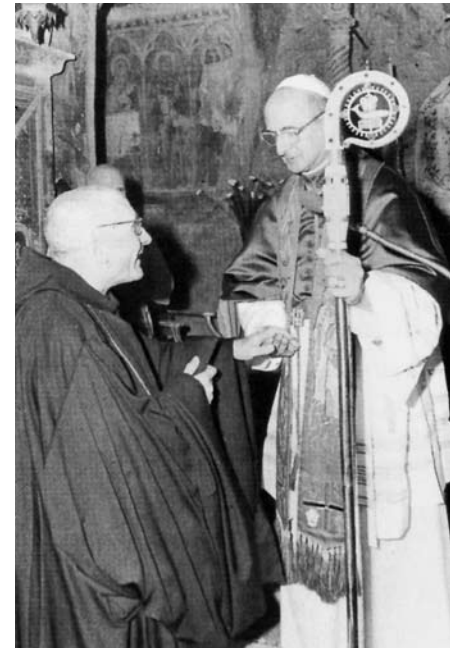
An amethyst owned by the revolutionary grandmother Kuliscioff, set in the episcopal ring of a Benedictine abbot, her Gavazzi grandson, is in itself pure poetry<sup>26</sup>.

He was extremely attached to his sister Anna Maria, the Carmelite nun Sister Maria Angela. After the death of Abbot Caronti he became her spiritual aid.

He never forgot his youthful years in Desio and regularly returned to visit.

### *Relations with Filippo Turati*

Turati acted as grandfather to Guido and his brothers and sisters. When he fled to Paris, Guido contributed in helping him escape. Destiny had it, in fact, that Luigi was close to Turati in one of the most difficult times of his life; on the occasion, that is, of his famous escape from Milan in 1925.



Pope Paul VI presenting one of his pastoral staffs as a gift to Abbot Gavazzi (1971).

<sup>26</sup> When Pope John XXIII visited Subiaco, in 1960, it was Don Egidio who received him and delivered a brief welcoming speech. In September 1971, now an Abbot in every sense, the grandson of Andrea Costa and Anna Kuliscioff received Pope Paul VI who, in his speech to the monks, remembered specifically his old university friend from the FUCI (Association of Italian Catholic University Students) with these words: «We have come to greet you in the Lord, venerable Father Abbot Don Egidio Gavazzi, to whom we are dearly attached through far-off memories and common sentiments, worthy successor of the greatly-mourned late Abbot Salvi and a fine reflection of a singular and noble figure of a Subiaco monk, the much-lamented Abbot Don Emanuele Caronti, one of the first maestros of the liturgical revival in Italy ...».

Paul VI, however, went further. On that occasion he gave Abbot Egidio his own personal pastoral staff, saying: «Dear and venerable Father Abbot, as we have said, we came also to see you, to honour your person, your vocation and your mission, entrusted to you by the Lord, of leading the community of this monastery ... And we therefore take the liberty of placing in your hands our own pastoral staff, which we received from a bishop who was very dear to the Benedictines, Monsignor Domenico Menna, who called to Chiari the exiled Abbey of Sainte Madelaine in Marseilles, when the Benedictine monks and other orders were expelled from France, and gave them accommodation in a monastery he himself had purchased for this very purpose. This shows you how attached and devoted he was to the monastic order of the Benedictines, who subsequently returned to France and specifically to Hautcombe, where the tombs of the royal family of Savoy lie. Before passing away, he chose to give me his pastoral staff, which I brought to Milan, and I, not having now any more occasion to use it, place it in your hands, as a Benedictine monk and as the Ordinary Abbot of this Abbey.»

In 1974 the abbot, now almost 70 years old, decided to pass on the reins to younger, fresher leaders, and resigned from his office. His resignation was accepted by Pope Paul VI «with great regret and respect».



The monastery in Subiaco of which Father Egidio was abbot.

The Fascist regime, in power at the time, did not tolerate opposition, especially when it was represented by popular leaders like Turati.

The Socialist leader was reduced to living shut up in his home, practically under house arrest. «I remember very well», says Father Egidio; «he was now an old man and was feeling poorly due to two great sorrows – grandmother's death (she had passed away the year before, leaving an enormous emptiness that could not be filled), and the turn the political situation had taken.

The building he lived in had two entrances, and each was guarded by a police patrol. Escape seemed truly impossible. Everyone knew about his illness, including the police, and when I left the house after visiting him they would ask after his health. One day, a non-commissioned officer stopped me and asked: «Is it true that Turati is worse?». I answered that he was, but it was not true. The fact was that we were planning his escape, and it was to our advantage to spread the word that he was at death's door.

In carefully examining the apartment, I had discovered that from a certain window it was possible to pass quite easily into the tenement house next door. From there Turati, strengthened by the hope of freedom, was able to leave from an unguarded door leading to a street which was not patrolled by the police.

Here a car was waiting for him and took him speedily out of the city, delivering him finally, safe and sound, to the home of Ettore Albini, in a village in the Lombard countryside. Someone, fearing that during the trip he might be recognised because of his characteristic beard, suggested that he shave it off, but I was firmly against the idea, thinking how such a cheap trick would have humiliated and demoralised him.

The police did not suspect anything. The escape had no consequences; in fact, the then Prefect of Milan sent for me and asked me for news of Turati's health, and showed me a letter signed by Mussolini, in which the Head of State expressed concern for his old companion.»

Turati moved to Paris, and when Luigi wrote to tell him of his decision to enter the monastery he received no reply. Worried, he decided to go in person to Paris, but it was a long time before he managed to make the journey, since he had great difficulty getting a passport (even when he worked at Monteneve, Luigi was continually watched by the police).

He found the old master even wearier and more bitter than he had remembered him. This was the first time they had seen each other since the day of the escape from Milan.

«Turati was sitting at a table, busily writing », recalls Father Egidio, moved. «When he saw me his eyes lit up and he rose to greet me, clasping me in his arms. I was extremely moved, because I had interpreted his silence as a sign of disapproval for the difficult step I was preparing to take. However, he said to me with his kind, calm voice: «If this is your will, it is right that you should follow it. Remember, though, that life is long and often, with the passing of the years, men change. What would you do if one day you no longer felt your calling?»; I answered him that I would entrust myself again to the Divine Will and he could only agree. We spent several days together, and during this time I met Pietro Nenni, with whom I had

long conversations. When I had to leave, Turati accompanied me to the station – that was the last time I saw him.

If I look back and remember the years spent in Grandmother's house, I must say that not once did Filippo Turati attempt to force Socialist theories upon me, neither was he ever a bad example to me. From this point of view, Grandmother was also extremely liberal, and it was she, for example, who reminded the servants to go to Mass. I remember the first time I took Holy Communion.

She asked me if I was happy, and I answered that I was. She did not speak, but in her infinitely sweet expression there was a hint of a secret sorrow, perhaps for a faith she could not manage to have.»

### *A profile of Don Egidio*

In a wonderful interview that appeared in the February 8, 1963 issue of *Gente* (TN: People) there is a «snapshot» bio of Father Egidio. There, in the Monastery of Subiaco, Father Egidio, at almost 60, was speaking quietly about his past.

He was squarely-built, with very light blue eyes, which stood out against the tanned skin of his mountaineer's face, and a calm, clear voice that plainly betrayed a Lombard accent.

He was Abbot in the Benedictine monasteries of Santa Scolastica and Sacro Speco in Subiaco, as well as Assistant Bishop of the Subiaco district.

His mother, as we have seen, was the fruit of the short-lived union between Andrea Costa, the famous militant from Emilia Romagna (organiser of the Genoa conference which led to the founding of the Labour Party and founder of the newspaper *Avanti!*), and Anna Kuliscioff, who later started a collaboration with Filippo Turati in Milan, where she had moved with her daughter. She had met Turati in Naples and had herself directed his attention to Socialism and away from the first passion of his youth – literature.

Turati was later to become the most prominent figure of Italian Socialism; the relationship between the two revolutionaries soon turned into a love affair, and before long Kuliscioff went to live with him.

Turati represented the intellectual centre of Marxist Socialism (rigid in theory but tolerant and vaguely romantic in practice) that attracted so many. It was in this environment that Don Egidio's mother was raised.

This is how Father Egidio recalls his regular visits to the home of Turati in Piazza Duomo no. 23, Milan. «In grandmother's home I had my first encounters with Filippo Turati and with the main leaders of the Socialist movement. I was 17 years old and hung on to every word of their conversations. I was present at all the meetings, partly because Turati was especially attached to me – so much so that he wanted me to call him 'uncle'. Hearing them talk, I



Don Egidio Gavazzi,  
grandson of Anna  
Kuliscioff and Andrea  
Costa.

had the strange feeling that there was something missing in their theories; one sensed a kind of blank.

Social problems alone could not fill the life of a man. Later, when I became a priest, I put the problem to myself in more explicit terms: How is it, I wondered, that such intelligent and profoundly upright men, having considered the religious question, have not discovered the full truth? And yet my grandmother must have believed in the existence of God and the spirituality of the soul when she wrote to a friend: I assure you that I am approaching death serenely; almost with curiosity».

In an effort to understand the motives that had kept these people – as pure and enlightened as they were – in the dark, I hazarded an idea that, as part of His inscrutable plan, God chose to reveal to them only a measure of His truth, otherwise their generous souls would have driven them towards a hermit's life, or a total dedication to the cause of human suffering, whereas it is God's will that redemption reaches its goals in all directions, including that of social justice. For this reason, the more I listened to them, the more I became convinced that their theories were partial and, as such, distorted reality. They were devoid of the quickening spirit of the Catholic doctrine that completes them all. And it was at this point that I became certain that Marxism could never have satisfied my soul, which sought something higher.» Don Egidio, therefore, had ancestors of a completely different background. About Andrea Costa, the father of Italian Socialism and the first Socialist Deputy in Parliament, he says: «No, I never met grandfather Andrea. I was five years old when he died, but at the time he was already on bad terms with my mother – he had never forgiven her for having married a member of the middle class.»

«We children had always considered Filippo Turati as our grandfather – in Milan we lived close by, Grandmother (Anna Kuliscioff) and Turati in the Gallery, and we in Via Brera.»

The following consideration was written on the subject<sup>27</sup>. «The first generation (Kuliscioff, Costa, Turati) fought against those who owned too much, the second for the strictly necessary, the third for neither being owned nor owning. The first generation also proclaimed the freedom of man from God; the second, the freedom of man in God, and the third, the freedom of God in man, which is absolute.

«All three generations share the same trait – heroism. The first, social heroism; the second, domestic heroism, and the third, heroism without adjectives – that of holiness.»



A photo of the young Anna Maria Gavazzi (1907-1975).

### **ANNA MARIA GAVAZZI (SISTER MARIA ANGELA) (1907-1975)**

Anna Maria was born in Desio on June 3, 1907. She spent her childhood first in Desio and later in San Remo, where the family had moved following the illness of her father, Luigi, who died in 1917.

In 1922 her mother Andreina (daughter of Costa and Kuliscioff) moved back to Desio. Anna

<sup>27</sup> Mino Martelli, *Andrea Costa e Anna Kuliscioff: rivelazioni sulla coppia da nuovi documenti*, Edizioni Paoline, Rome, 1980.





Maria was then attending high school in Monza. Finally, in 1923, the family was able to settle down in Milan, in a vacant apartment in the Gavazzi building at n. 18 Via Brera.

### *Life in Milan*

In Milan it was no longer possible to live «in a shell» and the children found themselves immersed in social life, especially since Grandmother Peppina «liked entertaining relatives and friends, and even organised little dance parties now and then.»

Their mother, Andreina, prayed hard that her children would not lose the fundamental simplicity of life to which she had accustomed them. In fact, strangely enough, even though it had never been forbidden, not one of the children, from Luigi to Pietro, ever wanted to learn to dance.

In those years Anna Maria dedicated a great deal of her time to the San Vincenzo charity association.

After graduating from classical high school in 1924, she enrolled at the university, where she began studying engineering with the intent of assisting her beloved brother Luigi in his profession. After two years, however, she decided to switch to medicine, and in 1932 she graduated with full grades. Her grandmother, Anna Kuliscioff, had also studied engineering, in Zurich, and had later graduated in medicine. Moreover, her mother Andreina had also studied medicine.

Anna Maria loved the mountains, and she often went hiking in the Aosta Valley with her brothers Guido and Pietro.

She was part of the anti-Fascist opposition and an active supporter of the FUCI (Association of Italian Catholic University Students - founded in 1896) and was appointed president of the Milan branch (1926-29) by Righetti and Monsignor Montini (who was later to become Pope



Sister Maria Angela Gavazzi.  
Left: the Carmelite convent in Arezzo.

Paul VI). Those who knew her during the years of her involvement with FUCI remembered her as «frank, intelligent and open to all problems, while at the same time one perceived her as being very close to God, although she did not force her spirituality on anyone»; «tireless to the point of self-sacrifice»; «humbly affectionate with her companions»; «friendly and good-hearted»; «the assurance of an environment of goodness and mercy»; «a very sweet creature – completely dedicated to others' needs, and pure in her virtue»; «always ready to show the most perfect charity».

### *Her religious calling*

In around 1929 she met the Abbot Don Emanuele Caronti, who became her spiritual advisor. Caronti made her wait for eight years. Luigi was already a monk, and the Abbot was concerned that with the two eldest children intent on following their vocation, their mother would be left alone.

On September 8 1938, ten years after her brother Luigi entered the Benedictine Order, Anna Maria entered the Order of the Carmelites in Florence. Those who knew her did not hear the news until afterwards.

This radical choice was the fruit of a six-year quest, characterised by trials and travails and concluding with the transformation of the doctor into a cloistered nun. The radicalism of grandfather Andrea Costa and grandmother Anna Kuliscioff, along with the grace of the Holy Spirit, became the radicalism of Anna Maria. Beautiful, intelligent and rich, she opted for the totalitarianism of giving, which was the consequence of her total devotion to her ideal.

The doctor Anna Maria Gavazzi irrevocably became the Carmelite nun.

At her enrobing ceremony on March 24, 1939 she took the name of Carmelite nun Sister Maria Angela of the Eucharist and the Holy Countenance; she took her solemn vows and the veil on March 25–26, 1943, again in the midst of the World War. The convent infirmary automatically became her ministry and her training ground for the substantiation of human suffering.

On June 21, 1943, she was transferred to the former Redi Villa, in Arezzo, which had been purchased with her contribution and transformed into Carmelo Santa Teresa Margherita<sup>28</sup>. Franco Gavazzi, her cousin, wrote in his diary: «Since she could not donate her personal fortune to her convent in Florence, as it was strictly against the rules, she has bought – with the full consent of the Abbot, Father Caronti, protector of the Order – a villa in Arezzo for the establishment of another convent of which she, in time, would naturally become Mother Superior. Now she is there, without veil or reclusion (again by special permission of the above-mentioned Abbot), to supervise the building works, which are being carried out

---

<sup>28</sup> She was accompanied by her brother, Don Egidio, and her sister Ernestina. On the trip she suffered from an intense headache, due to two air raids during the previous night, and upon arrival the little group of pioneers found themselves in a completely makeshift environment – not the convent, but an underground bomb shelter. The bombs and firebombs of 1944 favoured reclusion and extended it to the common people in search of shelter and safety. On the evening of July 14<sup>th</sup> the peaceful life of the convent was transformed into a nightmare that lasted two days, in which the nuns' faith was put to the test in a succession of shellings, air raids and machine-gun fire, until finally, on July 16<sup>th</sup>, the tolling of the Cathedral bells announced the return of peace and quiet.

under the direction of former engineer Don Egidio, himself a Benedictine monk!»

Sister Maria Angela was first teacher of the novices, then vice-Prioress and later Prioress (1952–1955).

With her brother, Don Egidio, she maintained a close relationship which, even more than before, was one of mutual spiritual support. The Benedictine monk, always humble in his conviction and expression, was often teacher and counsellor, while the Carmelite nun supported her brother's ministry through prayer and sacrifice, in an atmosphere of mutual trust and love that more than once was expressed in brotherly correction.

The central idea of her spirituality, which emerges in her letters and notes, is her faith in the sacrificial nature of the religious profession which, inspired by the Spanish Carmelite mystics, steadily led her towards practising the *nothing for all* credo of St. John in the Cross. For this idea she renounced wealth, property and a promising medical career.

In 1961, at the age of 54, she suffered a stroke and from that time on her health, which had been so taxed by years of hardships, sacrifices and acts of mortification, deteriorated fatally. Like her brother Don Egidio, she lived her vocation wholeheartedly and radiated peace and serenity<sup>29</sup>.

Much has been written about her (and about her brother Don Egidio)<sup>30</sup>.

In an interview she gave to the newspaper *Il Resto del Carlino*, she had this to say about her family: «Grandmother was an extremely intelligent and extraordinary woman. She had graduated in medicine like mother and myself, did you know? Before, she had enrolled in Zurich in engineering, but she took her degree in medicine, in Naples. No, she was not a believer, unfortunately, but she performed a great deal of charity – she visited the poor in their homes, in Milan; she has left behind her a good memory. I recall a portrait in pastel that we had in Desio – I remember that the artist once came to touch it up by hand. The face was kind, but serious. Her blonde hair stood out against the rosy-coloured background. When I was born, grandmother was already with Turati. He was a fine man – we called him *Filippin*. To mother he was a true father .»

Sister Maria Angela lived and died as a saint. She passed away on February 16, 1975 in Arezzo, where she had lived uninterruptedly since 1943. She was 68 years old, the same age as grandmother Kuliscioff when she passed away. The funeral procession to the cemetery of Arezzo was also attended by her niece Sofia, Egidia's eldest daughter (married to Cerletti). Sofia was a missionary of the Little Sisters of Jesus, and was at the time waiting to be granted a visa for Turkey, marking a new generation of spirituality and religious calling.

<sup>29</sup> In addition to the tendency towards sacrifice, which some might attribute naturally, though ludicrously, to the psycho-physical influx of chromosomes from grandmother Kuliscioff, Sister Maria Angela also revealed a thirst for poverty, which others, equally ludicrously, might individuate as the residue of chromosomes from grandfather Andrea Costa. It is true that the favourite slogan of the nun, «Own neither yourself nor others», transcended the Socialism of Costa and Kuliscioff, transforming it into the purest Christianity. Sister Maria Angela had willingly and joyfully renounced a family, as a woman, her mother, as a daughter, her profession as a doctor and even her name and surname. As a nun, she renounced all her worldly wealth and even the possibility of caring for her mother. Her last sacrifice was to be that of life itself.

<sup>30</sup> The most complete and thorough account of her life is the book *Dall'utopia alla profezia*, by Sister Romana Palozzi, Carmelo di Arezzo, published by Edizioni Paoline, Milan, 1982.

