1960

A.C.L.I. Catholic Associations of Italian Workers

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Recommended Citation
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A.C.L.I. CATHOLIC ASSOCIATIONS OF ITALIAN WORKERS

by

Reverend James Aloysius Mohler, S.J.

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Institute of Social and Industrial Relations in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Social and Industrial Relations

February

1960
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LIFE

Rev. James Aloysius Mohler, S.J., was born in Toledo, Ohio, July 22, 1923.

He graduated from Central Catholic High School, Toledo, Ohio, in June, 1941. He entered the Society of Jesus at Milford, Ohio, in September, 1942, and received the Bachelor of Literature degree from Xavier University of Cincinnati, Ohio, in June, 1946. From 1949 to 1952 the author taught economics and mathematics at St. Ignatius High School, Chicago, Illinois. In June, 1955, he was ordained a priest at West Baden College, a branch of Loyola University. Here the author also received his Licentiate in Philosophy and Sacred Theology. Summers the author has studied economics at St. Louis University and at the University of Wisconsin. He began studies at the Institute of Social and Industrial Relations of Loyola University in September, 1957.
PREFACE

The author has been interested for some time in Catholic Action among the working classes as has been outlined in the famous encyclicals, Rerum Novarum of Pope Leo XIII and Quadragesimo Anno of Pope Pius XI. A.C.L.I., Catholic Associations of Italian Workers, seem to be a successful application of the idea of Catholic associations of workers, first suggested by Leo XIII and later recommended by Pius XI and Pius XII.

Through the kindness of Fr. Mario Reina, S.J., of Centro Studi Sociali, Milan, Italy, the author was able to obtain many original works pertaining to the A.C.L.I. movement. These books, booklets, catalogues, and reviews have given the writer a clearer insight into the movement, its purposes and functions, its successes and failures.

Translations from the Italian were done by the author with the help of Fr. Valerio Ortalani, S.J.
Pope Leo XIII, seeing the conditions resulting from the Industrial Revolution, wrote his famous encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, in which he declared:

In any case we clearly see, and on this there is general agreement, that some opportune remedy must be found quickly for the misery and wretchedness pressing so unjustly on the majority of the working class: for the ancient working-men's guilds were abolished in the last century, and no other protective organization took their place. Public institutions and laws set aside the ancient religion. Hence by degrees it has come to pass that working men have been surrendered, isolated and helpless to the hard-heartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition. The mischief has been increased by a rapacious usury, which, although more than once condemned by the church, is, nevertheless, under a different guise, but with like injustice, still practiced by covetous and grasping men. To this must be added that the hiring of labor and the conduct of trade are concentrated in the hands of comparatively few; so that a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the teeming masses of the laboring poor a yoke little better than that of slavery itself.\(^1\)

Leo XIII wrote *Rerum Novarum* in 1891 to point out to all the very great need for social reconstruction and to outline some very practical means for accomplishing the renewing of the social order. The Socialists had proposed their solution to the social problem in a plan based on the confiscation of private property. Pope Leo XIII proposed the Church's solution based on private ownership of property and class peace. The Marxian Socialists planned a destruction of the social order, whereas Pope Leo outlined the construction of a better social order along the lines of the already existing factors of capital and labor. Why not unite capital and labor instead of pitting one against the other in an attitude of class war? The Socialists and the Marxists had rallied to the side of the worker with their rosy promises of a classless society and

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with their radical and enthusiastic cries of revolution had won many to their side. In order to counteract this insidious interest of the Socialists and the Marxists in the working classes, the Church, the State, and the workers themselves should do something constructive to help the working peoples of the world. Thus pleaded Pope Leo to the world of his day.  

Quadragesimo Anno

Forty years quickly passed and, although conditions in the world of the worker were improved, still there was need of more reconstruction of the social order. The Great Depression with its layoffs, bread lines, and in some places starvation of the workers, greatly aggravated the plight of the working classes. This, together with renewed activity on the part of the Communist forces to win over the workers to their cause, prompted Pope Pius XI to write his famous encyclical Quadragesimo Anno, in 1931, in which he again brought before the eyes of the world the Christian principles of social justice and reconstruction laid down by Leo XIII forty years before.

Sometime the question arises which challenges the Church's right to pronounce in matters economic. Pius XI answers this objection in Quadragesimo Anno:

She can in no way renounce the duty God entrusted to her to interpose her authority, not of course in matters of technique for which she is neither suitably equipped nor endowed by office, but in all things that are connected with the moral law. For as to these, the deposit of truth that God committed to Us and the grave duty of disseminating and interpreting the whole moral law, and of urging it in season and out of season, bring under and subject to Our supreme jurisdiction not only social

2Gibson, pp. 219-240.
order, but economic activities themselves.  

The Church, then, is interested in the whole man. It is ordained to help man attain his eternal salvation. For man the economic and moral orders are not distinct so that one in no way depends on the other. No, man must work in the economic order to support himself and his family in order to attain eternal life. If working conditions are such that, due to low wages or other injustices, a man finds it difficult to attain the end for which he was created, the Church, as his Divinely founded guide to heaven, may interfere, in fact, must interfere to correct these injustices.

Working Men’s Associations

One of the means suggested by Pope Leo XIII for bettering the conditions of the working classes was the workingmen’s association, which, Leo insisted, should be founded on religious principles:

To sum up then we may lay down as a general and lasting law that working-men’s associations should be so organized and governed as to furnish the best and most suitable means for attaining what is aimed at, namely, to help each individual member to better his condition to the utmost on body, soul, and property. It is clear that they must pay special attention to the duties of religion and morality, and that social betterment should have chiefly in view this end; otherwise they would lose wholly their special character, and end by becoming little better than those societies which take no account whatever of religion.  

Pius XI also gave his blessing to the working-men’s associations especially in places where Catholic workers belonged to secular labor unions or syndicates.

4 Gilson, p. 236.
Side by side with these unions there should always be associations zealously engaged in imbuing and forming their members in the teaching of religion and morality so that they may in turn be able to permeate the unions with that good spirit which should direct them in their activity. As a result, the religious associations will bear fruit even beyond the circle of their own membership.

To the encyclical of Leo, therefore, must be given this credit, that these associations of workers have so flourished everywhere that while alas, still surpassed in numbers by socialist and communist organizations, they already embrace a vast multitude of the workers and are able, within the confines of each nation as well as in wider assemblies, to maintain vigorously the rights and demands of the Catholic workers and insist also on the salutary Christian principles of society. 5

The Communist and Socialist groups mentioned by Pope Pius are, indeed, interested in the working classes. Communism, with its alluring promises of equality for all, with its atheistic materialism, with its class war against the exploitation of capitalism, has long been fighting for the allegiance of the workers. Popes from Leo XIII to John XXIII have frequently condemned Communism and have taught that the Church must act in order to keep the workers from falling into red hands. Pope Pius XI in his encyclical, Divini Redemptoris, urges the clergy and the laity to fight Communism. A potent weapon in this fight is the group action of the Catholic laity.

Ranged with Catholic Action are the groups which we have been happy to call its auxiliary forces. With paternal affection We exhort these valuable organizations also to dedicate themselves to the great mission of which we have been treating, a cause which today transcends all others of vital importance.

We are thinking likewise of those associations of workmen, farmers, technicians, employers, students, and others of like character, groups of men and women who live in the same cultural atmosphere and share the same way of life. Precisely these groups and organizations are destined to introduce into society that order which We have envisaged.

in Our encyclical, Quadragesimo Anno, and thus to spread in the vast and various fields of culture and labor the recognition of the kingdom of Christ.

Note the associations of workers and others that Pius XI again urges as means of reconstructing the social order among those who live in the same cultural environment and share the same way of life.

The ACLI, Catholic Associations of Italian Workers, following along with the papal suggestions, have formed themselves into associations for the social help of the working classes in Italy, to institute a positive program of social reconstruction in order to counteract the false, yet attractive, promises of Communism.

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CHAPTER II

THE BEGINNINGS OF ACLI

What were the conditions in Italy after World War II in which the ACLI were born? After General Clark's armies had defeated the German regiments, with Italy in a weakened state, and the lines of authority not yet clear, the Communists swiftly moved in.

**Communist Activity**

Why were the Communists interested in Italy? If Communism could take over Italy, it would control the north-south and east-west communications of four hemispheres just as the Rome-Berlin Axis had held an important strategic position in the thirties and early forties. If Italy were lost to Communism, our whole plan for the protection of Western Europe would have to be changed. The Allied fleets would be kept from the Eastern half of the Mediterranean and the rich Middle East with its vast supplies of oil would be cut off from its shortest route to the West. Moreover, in Italy Communism had the headquarters of its arch-enemy, the Roman Catholic Church. If the Communists could defeat

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7 Luigi Barzini, Jr., "Italy's Creeping Communism," Harpers, 209 (October 1951), 84.
Catholicism in Italy and imprison the Pope, they would obtain a major victory in their battle against the Church. So the Communists had many good reasons for extending every effort to proselytize the Italian workers.

The Communists had speedy initial successes in the days following World War II. How could they win so many followers in a Catholic country? Palmiro Togliatti, the Communist party boss in Italy, ascribes his success to, "History, ability, and the mistakes of our opponents." Under history one might include the revolutionary tradition of the Italian working movement and the grave economic conditions in Italy after World War II which prompted people to distrust the present regime and to look elsewhere for social justice. Ability includes the organizational techniques and propaganda methods of the party workers. One mistake of the opponents was the lack of effort on the part of the government to actively combat Communism.

The Communists in Italy after World War II had a new party line. All violence and intolerance were sidestepped. Smiles were the order of the day. Togliatti maintained, "The party will only propose and work for the creation of a parliamentary democratic republic." No longer a class-conscious organization, the Communists were now a national party struggling for the help and success of all Italians. The new peaceful approach was well expressed in party orders to the effect that members in celebrating family feasts should lift their glasses of wine and say, "To peace."

Did the average Italian's Catholicism give him scruples about joining the

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8Barzini, p. 65.
9Ibid., 86.
CommtSUat Party? According to Barnett, Italians tend to resent Church intervention in political affairs and have no serious trouble reconciling their Catholicism with disobedience to the Church's directives in the political sphere.10

**Economic Conditions in Italy After World War II**

What were the economic conditions in Italy after World War II that made the rise of Communism bloom to immediate success? Poverty and unemployment, which were widespread in post-war Italy, were and are the two greatest arguing points of the Communists. Likewise, they are the two areas in which the ACLI are most actively engaged.

Italy has always been economically poor for capital is scarce and natural resources such as coal, oil, iron ore are not abundant. Total arable land is one-fourth below that of France. Although the northern part of Italy is industrialized and somewhat prosperous, the south, which is heavily populated, is very poor and the rocky terrain makes very poor farm land.11

Unemployment is high in Italy with figures running around two million or almost ten per cent of the labor force out of work at any one time.12 Underemployment is a problem closely connected with the unemployment situation. A few figures made in 1952 will show how serious the underemployment was at that time.

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10V. M. Barnett, Jr., "Competitive Coexistence and the Communist Challenge in Italy," *Political Science Quarterly*, 70 (June 1955), 237.


A survey in northern Italy at the same time showed that in 1,776 plants employing 213,000 workers, 72% were on reduced time and 6.5% had been laid off over a six-month period.\textsuperscript{13a}

Although the national economy of Italy has been steadily improving since World War II, nevertheless, the two basic problems of poverty and unemployment remain and are still the basis of attacks on the present government by the Communist forces. Solving these two problems would do much to satisfy the wants of the Italian people and turn them away from their Communist leanings.

\textbf{Italian Syndicalism}

Let us consider for a few moments, as necessary background to our study of ACLI, the syndical or trade union situation in Italy. First of all, these are the three main confederations with their claimed memberships in 1957:

- **Italian General Confederation of Labor (CGIL):** 4 million workers. This group includes the Communist and Italian Socialist workers.

- **Italian Confederation of Workers Unions (CISL):** 2 million members. It includes Social Democrat and Catholic workers.

- **Italian Labor Union (UIL):** 600,000 members. It includes Social Democrat and Republican workers.

\footnote{Giovanni Pastore, "Italy's Plight," American Federationist, 59 (September 1952), 15.}

\footnote{Ibid.}
There are other smaller confederations including the Italian Confederation of National Workers' Unions, (CISNAL). However, the three larger and more influential ones are more worthy of note. Their relative strengths according to Internal Commission elections in 1957 was: CGIL won 55% of the elections; CISL, 35%; UIL, 6%; others, 4%.

The Italian workers are organized according to categories, or, according to trade or industry, if you will. For example, there are the steel workers, metal and mechanical workers, railroad workers, textile workers, etc. For collective bargaining these categories may be split up into sub-groups. For instance, the textile workers category would include workers in cotton, silk, wool, rayon, hemp, flax, etc. Each of these groups would have its own problems to be solved through collective bargaining and would benefit more from separate bargaining than from an over-all category bargaining so popular under the Fascist regime. The new pattern in Italy is shifting collective bargaining more and more towards the plant level.

A very important factor at the plant level is the Internal Commission, which is an elective committee established in each plant or shop to handle grievances and to help interpret the contract. The Internal Commissions are similar to our American grievance committees, yet they have a much broader area of activity. They are elected by all the workers in the shop whether they belong to a union or not. Moreover, each employee must vote his preference for

15 Ibid., 438.
the Internal Commission in a complete slate, e.g., either CGIL, CISL, or UIL, with no split ballots. 1955 marked a turning point in the northern part of Italy when the Communist Internal Commissions were voted out of many of the larger plants such as Fiat in Turin and Falck and Innocenti in Milan.16

Foundation of ACLI

When and where did the ACLI come into being? In Rome, August 26 to 28, 1944, there was a convention of Dominican fathers on the Piazza della Minerva. These men were directors of various Catholic Action groups throughout Italy, including syndical, political and social organizations. Making good use of their knowledge and experience in the field of Catholic Action, they laid the foundations of the new movement, ACLI.

Unified Syndicate, CGIL

Rome had been freed only a few weeks from the German occupation when it saw the beginnings of the new syndical or trade union experiment called "Unita Sindicale," or Syndical Unity. The Syndicalists of the large "pre-Fascist" Syndicates and other representatives of the larger groups of workers gave their support to this new syndicate in order to gather together in one unified movement all the workers in a manner which would leave them free from every ideology and independent of every political faction.17

This unification of Italian syndicates or unions seemed to be a good idea and even the Catholic workers gave it their full support for, at that time, they

16 Guigi, p. 425.

17 ACLI, Le ACLI, Principi, Attivita, Struttura; Collana Organizzazioni I, (Rome, 1950), pp. 3-4.
saw no danger in a unified syndicate. Thus, the Catholics renounced their own syndicate in this general experiment of unification which appeared so promising and opportune. But the Catholic workers could not renounce their duties of religious formation and practices. These needs would not be fostered and encouraged in the new syndicate which was religiously neutral.

Pope Leo XIII had foreseen such an event and had given instructions to be followed, namely, to found Catholic workingmen's associations for the moral and social formation of men and women who are members of neutral unions. Pius XI, as we saw in Chapter I, also gave his blessing to these social action groups. In response to the grave need for Catholic social action in the new unified syndicate, ACLI were formed.

The early beginnings of ACLI were difficult. In the inevitable chaos of the post-war period, Communism had made decided gains among the workers. The Communists had made a plea for syndical unity in the name of patriotism. In this situation, the Catholic workers, men and women, had to make a strenuous defense against the advances of the Soviet atheistic ideology in its Italian form.

ACLI quickly spread through Central and Southern Italy, and as soon as the North was liberated by the armies of General Clark, they began to develop in the Northern provinces, too. In this early period, ACLI showed that their scope went beyond the formation and preparation for syndical activities and developed into a full fledged workingman's association orientated to a very broad social action.¹⁸

¹⁸ Le ACLI, Principi, p. 6.
Communist Domination of CGIL

After the first few months in which the syndical unification experiment seemed to be a profitable one, a progressive permeation on the part of the Communists was noted, and this not only in the syndicate activities, but also in a general plan to use the unified syndicate as a pawn or as a tactical weapon of the Communist Party.

Political strikes, violence, wild speeches raging against democracy, more and more the unified syndicate revealed itself as a tool of Communism. Catholic groups rose to counterattack the Communists. The ACLI, which united many of the Catholic workers in the syndicate, felt a high degree of responsibility in the fight. ACLI counteraction could not go unnoticed. The Communists used allurements, threats, and violence to stop all opposition. The ACLI underwent all sorts of intimidations, invasions, and even martyrdoms in this initial period of their existence. In the booklet, ACLI, Idee ed Opere, may be seen a picture of a group of Aclists making a pilgrimage in honor of one of their martyrs, one Giuseppe Fanin. A crowd of several hundred people holding aloft banners and a large picture of Giuseppe are paying their respects to the place of his martyrdom.19

ACLI's early days were spent working largely in the area of the syndicates. The ACLI spirit of these early days is well summed up in the slogan which was suggested in the First National Congress in September, 1946. "The ACLI are the expressions of the Catholic current in the syndical field."20

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20 Le ACLI, Principi, p. 7.
On July 14, 1948, a general strike was called by the Communist leaders of the CGIL. This political strike showed clearly the Communist intention of using the syndicate as a tactical instrument to be used for their revolutionary ends. This strike led to a radical division between the Communist and the non-Communist members of the CGIL.

**Founding of LCGIL**

LCGI called an extraordinary congress in the Fall of 1948 in which was pointed out to all the necessity of creating a new free syndicate, open to all, and not bound to any ideology or political faction, but rather founded on the moral law and on the principles of democracy. So the Libera Confederazione Generale Italiana Dei Lavoratori, Free Italian General Confederation of Workers, LCGIL, was born. Adams maintains that the organization of LCGIL was made easier by the tradition of the pre-Fascist "white" Catholic confederation, and by the existence of the post-Fascist Catholic workers' associations, ACLI.

But the ACLI are not Catholic unions, rather they are Catholic social action groups co-existing alongside of the unions and encouraging their members to take a leading part in trade union and syndicate activities, to animate the union with a spirit based on sound principles of Christian justice. It was proposed to extend ACLI activities beyond the syndical field. The ACLI, beginning their broader work of social action, now called themselves, "Le ACLI sono Il Movimento Sociale dei Lavoratori Cristiani," or, "The ACLI are the Social Movement of the...

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21 The "white" section of CGIL was Christian Democratic, while the "yellow" section was Socialist, and the "red," Communist.

Catholic Workers." After four years of existence the ACLI had reached a more explicit and complete consciousness of their nature and purpose of existence. 23

Papal Approval of ACLI

Since the ACLI are Catholic associations, one might ask whether in the early days the movement received ecclesiastical approval. We saw in the first chapter how the popes had fostered the idea of Catholic workingmen's associations to exist along with the neutral unions. Pius XII gave his blessing to the ACLI on March 11, 1945, when he spoke to a group of two hundred Acclists convening in Rome:

First of all, what do Catholic Workers' Associations mean to their members? Above all, they are nuclei of the modern care of souls in the sense that they care for and safeguard the religious and ethical foundation of the workers' life in a manner appropriate to the particular conditions of that life. Bring through your Associations, the principles of the Faith and a firm Christian structure into the religious and moral life of the worker and his family. Make your Associations...into centers of spiritual life so that the beneficial fruits of charity are shown in the words and deeds of their members. Once firmly established on these secure foundations, the Catholic worker will also be helped to extend his knowledge and his influence into other fields of private and public life.

The best material for building this temple of solidarity, a sure guarantee of social justice and peace, is provided by the spirit of the gospel, which flows towards you from the heart of the Savior of the world. No worker has ever been more deeply and more thoroughly penetrated by this spirit than He who lived in the most intimate communion of family life and work with His father, Saint Joseph, under whose powerful patronage we are working to enable the Catholic Workers' Associations to assist in building a new order in the world of labor, in accordance with their just aspirations. 24

23 Le ACLI, Principi, p. 10.

24 "Address of Pope Pius XII to ACLI, March 11, 1945," Catholic Mind, XLV (December 1947), 707-711.
Pius XII emphasized the spiritual motivation which should be the real driving force behind any reconstruction of the social order on the part of the workers' associations.

By way of summary, in this chapter we have seen the state of Italy after World War II with the Communists taking advantage of the chaotic condition of the country; the economic conditions of Italy, especially the poverty and unemployment; Italian syndicalism, or trade unionism, with its methods of election and collective bargaining; and, finally, the birth of ACLI, the Catholic Associations of Italian Workers.
CHAPTER III

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ACLI

What is the nature of ACLI? ACLI are not Catholic unions, nor are they Catholic divisions of secular unions. Rather, they are Catholic Associations of workers which exist side by side with the secular labor unions and which should be zealously engaged, as Pius XI said in Quadragesimo Anno, "In imbuing and forming their members in the teaching of religion and morality so that they may in turn be able to permeate the unions with that good spirit which should direct them in their activity."25

In the Statuto we find this epitome of the philosophy of ACLI:

The Catholic Associations of Italian Workers are the social movement of Catholic workers. They unite themselves in order that, in the application of Christian doctrine according to the teaching of the Church, they may recognize the foundations and the conditions of a renewed social order, in which may be insured, according to justice, the recognition of the rights and the satisfaction of the material and spiritual needs of the workers.26

The ACLI are, then, "The social movement of the Catholic workers." Let us examine this summary a bit closer to see more of the underlying philosophy.

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Workers' Associations

First of all, ACLI are a movement of the workers, that is, they are composed of workers and are the militant defenders of the workers' rights. This is the very basis of the whole movement. By "workers" the ACLI mean the dependent workers who generally comprise what we know as the working classes.

Conditions of work, rights, duties, interests, and ambitions are often in common to those who are in the same social class or in the same category. This tends to create a class solidarity, a community of interests and rights, that are reflected in the constitutions of unions and societies composed of those in the same category of work. Associations of those who pertain to the same category are, without a doubt, a natural and efficacious instrument for the moral and social defense of the category.

The ACLI do not intend to limit their membership to the chosen few, rather they aim for the mass of the dependent workers and wish to include as many as possible within their ranks.27

A Dynamic Movement

The ACLI are a movement. As a living movement, their form changes and grows as a living, dynamic instrument of the fraternization of the workers and of class solidarity. Moreover, these associations give concrete form to the community of the workers and thus constitute one of the very living needs of the social body. This is the prime justification of the movement of the workers, namely, that it represents a normal mode of living and being of the social body.

The ACLI are a Catholic movement. In Italy today there are two major
groups who claim to feel fully the needs of the workers for liberty and justice
and who are organized and capable of responding to those needs. First of all
Christianity, or more properly, social Christianity, and secondly, Communism,
maintain a great interest in the working classes. Communism, however, not only
does not guarantee liberty and justice, rather it depresses the prime principle
of the dignity of the human person and ignores the last end of man which must be
the corner stone of any order of social justice.

In the social battle of our times only one idea shows itself capable of se-
curing the fullness of justice through the expansion of the human person and the
protection of his liberty, and that idea is the Christian social idea, that
shining forth of the light of Christian doctrine in the midst of social prob-
lems. This idea is not of a Christianity closed up in a position of defense,
but rather advancing in a movement of conquest and of expansion. The Christian-
ity of the ACLI is not a passive ghetto-like Christianity closed in on itself,
but rather a dynamic and militant catholic action in the large sense.28

The associations are called "Christian" or "Catholic." In Italy the two
words are synonymous. What do we mean when we say that the ACLI are Christian
or Catholic? We mean that they are inspired by the principles of the doctrine
of Christ and that they try to actuate these principles in the world of the
worker. Two doctrines are outstanding, namely, love of God and of the neighbor,
and poverty in spirit. After World War II in the rush to help the working
classes, many factions rose up. But in the general movement, although the worker received much attention, nevertheless, Jesus Christ was rarely remembered and invoked as the Master and Guide. More often He was forgotten and sometimes even suspected and insulted as an enemy of the worker by the Communist agitators.

In the booklet, L’Azione Sociale Cristiana Ieri e Oggi, we find this very excellent comment:

Rarely has history recorded a calumny such as this. Enemy of the workers, He Who was a Worker Himself and a Redeemer of work, He Who was the scourge of every injustice and violence. The true story is this: Christ by His example and His teachings has returned to the worker his liberty and his dignity. If Christ had not gone through this on earth, if a new light had not shed itself on the world from the shop at Nazareth, perhaps the manual worker today would still be carrying the chains of slavery.

Christ, then, had a great interest in the worker as do His successors on earth, especially Popes Leo XIII, Pius XI, Pius XII, and John XXIII. Upon the example of Jesus Christ and upon the social teachings of His successors are founded the ACLI.

Monsignor Santo Quadri, the Central Ecclesiastical Assistant of ACLI, summed up ACLI’s Christianity in his address to the delegates of the Sixth National Congress:

In a world that enebriates itself with the progressive conquests of science and of technology, in a world imperiled by the tremendous possibility of destruction by nuclear arms, in a world that knows the saddening presence of materialism, either practical or enforced, of activities and organizations that continue to make fearful attempts against human liberty, which every day suffers more and more from a tragic inversion of the valor of life, in a world stricken by profound egotistic divisions among its peoples, in a world seriously upset by social and economic inequalities, in this world what place does the Catholic worker have and of what significance is a movement of the Catholic

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workers?

In this world the Catholic worker and a movement of Catholic workers have this significance, they are the bearers of authentic Christianity, a Christianity known and seen in its integrity and totality without intolerant sham, without equivocation or doctrinal compromise. Against a messianic materialism only a Christianity that possesses all its own riches and all its own strength can resist and conquer. These riches and this strength are the guarantees of peace and true social justice, and they are, first and foremost, supernatural. Hence the Catholic worker and the movement of the Catholic workers receive from Christianity not only social principles, but also all of its religious, supernatural essence. Thus the ACLI can be considered a by-product of Christianity and are an authentic Christianity engaged in the social life. 30

A Social Movement

Two basic characteristics of the ACLI we have seen, namely, they are a movement of the workers and they are a Catholic movement. Finally, they are a social movement. Of what does their social apostolate consist? ACLI outline three broad fundamental social areas of activity:

First, the promotion of a new social order realized principally through the efforts of the workers and focused on the working classes.

Second, the complete liberation, or better "L 'autoliberazione" of the worker that brings about the integral and unified expansion of his personality through the formative and cultural works, through the social services, and above all, through his active participation in the social apostolate.

Third, the Christian reconquest of the working classes through the Christian animation of the social structures, the penetration of the workers' environment, the radiation of Christian ideas in a spirit of fraternity and the

permeation of all phases of the life of the worker.

In these broad outlines the ACLI intend to fulfill their mission of the social apostolate. Pius XII called them, "Cells of the modern Catholic apostolate." The ACLI were founded to spread Catholic social action in the world of the worker. We will not attempt to expand here the broad outline of ACLI social action. Later chapters will treat this in detail.

The master plan of the ACLI, then, is social action. It is through social action that the masses, especially the workers, will be reconquered. Actually, it was under the guise of social aspirations that the masses, erring in their choice of a proper way, detached themselves from the Church and went over to Communism. Now it is the hope that, in the name of social justice promoted by a Christian inspired movement of the workers, these same masses will return to the Church.

The cornerstone of all ACLI activity is this principal philosophy: "The creation of a new social order, based on a structure and a rapport that are Catholic expressions of justice and liberty." This idea is to be the leaven of the new society in Italy. ACLI nourish this leaven through an incessant social action, which makes the weight of the Catholic workers felt in areas of public opinion and on the whole structure of society, on all levels and in every station of the social life covering the economic, religious, social, syndical, and political aspects and based solidly on the social teachings of the Catholic Church.

31 Le ACLI, Principi, p. 18.
32 ACLI, Idea, p. 12.
CHAPTER IV
THE ORGANIZATION OF ACLI

Having seen something of the ACLI philosophy, we will now investigate the organization of the associations. The "matter" of which ACLI are formed consists of the working classes of Italy of whom about 12 million are considered as organizable and about 4 million are actually members of trade unions.33 Of this number how many are members of ACLI? In their report on the 1957 membership, ACLI maintained:

All the pessimistic predictions were abandoned with the registrations last year. In 1957, moreover, there were further advancements in membership. Without a doubt, the vitality and maturity of the movement are shown in the faith of over one million members. In fact, in 1957 there were distributed among the provinces, the circles, and the nuclei, 1,015,700 membership cards, superior to that of any preceding year.34

ACLI membership was distributed as follows: Northern Italy, 53.7%; Central Italy, 21.9%; and Southern Italy, 24.4%. In 1957 an increase was shown in 62 provinces and in 14 regions. Distribution according to the sex of the members was: men up to 25, 16.6%; men over 25, 53.3%; women up to 25, 9.4%; women over

25, 20.7%. Roughly then, 70% of the membership are men, and 30% women. 35

The matter of which ACLI are made is the workers. But what form do the associations take? In outlining ACLI organizational structures, we will try to show the, not as cold, formal entities, but rather as phases of the movement of the workers. A movement moves and the ACLI's dynamism is evident even in the basic vertical and horizontal structural outlines.

**Vertical Structure**

The ACLI are divided into two fundamental structures: the vertical structure, built along the lines of the categories, or occupations; and the horizontal structure, which crosses occupational lines and includes all the workers of all different categories at the local, provincial and national levels.

The vertical structure of ACLI is, then, based on the categories or natural groupings of workers according to industry or occupation, for instance, Public Transportation Workers, Bank and Insurance Workers, Chemical Workers, Metal Workers, Railroad Workers, Government Workers, etc. It is natural for workers in the same industry or occupation to group together for they have many interests in common, they may work in the same plant and may have the same problems concerning hours, wages, working conditions, etc. The ACLI vertical structure, then, is close to the work environment.

The ACLI vertical structure is divided into the Business Nuclei, or ACLI cells of social action in the plant or business; and Groups of the Category which include workers of the same industry, but from different plants on the local, provincial, and national levels.

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Business Nucleus

What is a Business Nucleus? It is the cell or organism that unites the Catholic workers of one business, factory, or plant. It is the basic cell of the ACLI structure and, therefore, the most potent tactical weapon against Communism at the plant level. This is extremely important since the small factory elections of the Internal Commissions have been most successful in defeating Communism in its favorite stronghold, the working classes.

The Business Nucleus should be an Aclist leaven on the inside of the plant or business. It should be an instrument of Catholic social action in the environment of work itself. This Nucleus or cell of the Catholic workers is directed by a leader, or when the Nucleus is large, by a committee. One of the major tasks of the Nucleus is to organize the workers in the plant, to bring them into contact with ACLI and the ACLI program for social reconstruction. One could say that the Nuclei are the mouthpieces of ACLI in the plants and the factories. Moreover, they promote various formative activities and social services that correspond to the needs of the workers. For example, a Nucleus might promote a religious service, e.g., a Mass for the workers of one factory on a certain feast day; or the Nucleus might encourage the factory workers to buy at one of the ACLI co-operative stores in the neighborhood.36

How many Business Nuclei are in existence? In 1955 there were 5,40037 Nuclei which grew to 6,200 in 1956.38 Not all Aclists are members of nuclei, for

37 ACLI, ACLI, Relazione Generale Della Presidenza Centrale, 5 Congresso Nazionale, (Rome, 1955), p. 27.
38 ACLI, Idee, p. 4.
example, out 46,210 members of the Milan Province, 6,701 are included in 111 Nuclei. Some businesses seem better suited to the fostering of Nucleus development. For instance, the machinists of the Milan Province have eighteen Nuclei with a total of 838 members while the telegraph workers have only one Nucleus with 23 members. Domestic and farm workers have large memberships in ACLI, yet due to the dispersal of their membership, find it impractical to form Nuclei.39

The Group of the Category

The second subdivision of the ACLI vertical structure is the Group of the Category. ACLI members who belong to the same category or occupation whether it be chemical workers or carpenters, constitute an ACLI Group of the Category. More precisely, all the Nuclei of the same category and all the workers of the category, even those not collected in a Nucleus, form a Group of the Category. For instance, again we take an example from the Milan Province, the category of railroad workers has three Nuclei with 98 members, but it also has 56 who are not members of a Nucleus. This gives a total of 154 members of the Group of the Category.40

A Group of the Category can be either local, provincial, or national insofar as it embraces the workers of the same category of a town, province, or the whole country. Furthermore, each Group is guided by a Directive Committee and by the Secretary of the Category. The Group of the Category is important because it represents in the organizational plan of ACLI the category or the


40 Ibid.
occupational division of the syndicate. It not only represents the general interests of the occupation, but also gives Catholic guidance and animation to the activities of the category. Moreover, it passes on to the offices of the categories the general orientation of ACLI and performs some of the ACLI functions, social and otherwise, in the areas of the category.

One general problem now under discussion among the categories, is the participation of the workers in management. This is studied and proposed in the central headquarters of ACLI. But it is discussed and delineated again in the office of each category because each category ought to solve the problem according to its own situation and environment. For example, co-management among textile workers or chemical workers is not the same thing as co-management among bank employees. Even greater differences are found between the categories of farm workers and industrial workers. Who is to decide for these groups for whom the problem is so completely diverse? The general social problems and solutions proposed by the central office must again be reviewed in each category.

Naturally the Groups of the Category have a particular interest in syndical or trade union problems, because by their very nature, e.g., division according to occupation, they closely parallel syndical structure. Moreover, the Groups urge the participation of their members in the life of the Syndicate and indicate to them the fundamental principles of Catholic social doctrine.\textsuperscript{11}

How does ACLI membership vary from category to category? From the Milan Province we have these figures: commerce, 4,780; carpenters, 1,072; farmers, 2,522; weavers, 4,731; gas workers, 22; janitors and custodians, 92; transpor-

\textsuperscript{11} Le ACLI, Principi, pp. 69-71.
Let us consider, for the sake of example, one category with some of its activities during 1956 and 1957, namely, the category of railroad workers which, although a part of ACLI, nevertheless, maintains its own organizational structure imposed by the nature of railroad work. The category has developed through the years under the stimulus of the National Secretary and the Secretaries of fifteen compartments of railroad workers. Many meetings and convocations have been held to discuss the problems of the category principally at Turin, Alexandria, Genoa, Florence, Rome, Naples, Salerno, and Asti. On December 8 and 9, 1956, the category held its periodic National Assembly in order to examine attentively the organizational situation and to consider the more important problems of syndical and social interest for the category. One concluding motion of the convention was that the category should pledge itself to a better collaboration with the railroad workers syndicate of CISTL.

**Horizontal Structure**

Having seen the vertical structure of ACLI, based on the differentiations of the categories, now let us turn to the unifying element, that which brings together all the diverse categories of the workers from janitors to metal workers, namely, the horizontal structure of the movement. The Workers' Circle, or Circle of the Workers, is the basic cell of the ACLI horizontal structure. The Circle flourishes at the local level, in a town, a parish, a large rural area, and it includes all the workers of the place in all their diverse occupations.

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1. ACLI Milano, XI Congresso, p. 28.
whether men or women, old or young. It is the first stock of the large family of ACLI. The Circle gathers together all the Aclists, even those who for particular reasons do not participate in a Nucleus or in the activities of a category.

The Circle

The Circle is the basic cell in the city and in the country, just as the Nucleus is the basic cell in the factory or plant. The Nucleus arises and operates principally in the environment of work, whereas the Circle arises and operates in the environment of life outside the place of business. These two areas of "work" and "life" are of major interest to ACLI and constitute the "reason why" of their most fundamental units.¹⁴

Some general activities of the Workers' Circles are listed. First, the Circle cares for the formation of its members. It promotes, moreover, social, cultural, economic, and recreational activities in harmony with the ends of the Associations. These Circle projects may run all the way from courses in the papal social encyclicals to a summer camp for the children of workers. We shall see ACLI activities more in detail in the next chapter. The Circle carries out ACLI activities on the local level but always in cooperation with the Province.

Second, the Circle pursues on the local level the many problems that pertain to the workers and their families, and intervenes, when necessary, for the protection of their rights and interests. Local problems may range from unemployment to the lack of adequate housing for young apprentices who are learning a trade.

The main organs of the Workers' Circle are: the Assembly of the Workers, and the Council of the Presidency. The Assembly, according to the Statuto, should be called frequently in order to allow the members to participate in the activities of the Circle. Moreover, it should be called into special session annually to approve the reports of the Council, to approve the budget, to fix the general direction of work for the coming year, and to elect the Council of the Presidency.

The Council of the Presidency is composed of a variable number of members according to the size and needs of the Circle or what may be decided by the Assembly. The members of the Council elect from their number a President, Vice-President, Secretary, and an Administrator. Delegates from the Female Aclists and Young Aclists are also represented on the Council.45

Growth of the Workers' Circles is evident from the report of the Sixth National Congress of ACLI held at Florence in November, 1957, namely, that there were 7,063 Workers' Circles in 1957, a considerable increase from the 6,162 reported in 1955. Furthermore, they add, "Not rarely some Circles limit themselves to aggregation to the Central Office of ACLI only once, in the year of their inception, so we can estimate that there are about 8,000 Circles existing today.46

The Circle aggregated to the Central Office receives a series of organizational, propagandistic, and formative aids from central headquarters. Over a two year period, each Circle receives: weekly, the journal, Social Action;

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45 Statuto, p. 5.
46 ACLI Relazione Generale, 1957, p. 15.
monthly, the bulletin, *Le ACLI*; monthly and sometimes bimonthly, the review, *Copybook of Social Action*; here and there, various publications dealing with national problems, campaigns, syndical or political matters. Some topics covered in these publications include: membership, the crisis of Communism, industrial democracy, administration, the national campaign for Aclist solidarity. In this way the Central Office makes a concrete contribution and helps solve the first problem of every Workers' Circle, namely, to be in a grade of substantial correspondence with the principal objectives of the movement whether working in schools of formation, centers of social work, or the organization of economic works such as co-operative stores and the like.47

The Circles together with the vertical divisions, the Nuclei and Groups of the Category form the Provincial Sections of ACLI, ninety-one in number.

The Zone

However, a jump from the Circle to the Provincial Center is organizationally too long, for the Provinces are large and have many affairs to handle. Consequently, ACLI have introduced Zones as organs of decentralization of the Provinces. The Zones have the task of stimulating and coordinating the activities of the Circles within their territory and of maintaining connections with Provincial headquarters in order to facilitate the job of propaganda, control, and coordination. Now there are 463 Zones functioning in ACLI.48 The Milan Province has thirty-three Zones, of which eleven are within the city limits of Milan.

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47 *ACLI Relazione Generale*, p. 16.

The Province

The organ that assumes the responsibility of guiding the movement for both the vertical and horizontal structures at the Provincial level is known as the Provincial Committee which is an elective organ chosen by the annual Provincial Congress according to the Statutes. The Provincial Congress is made up of delegates from the Workers' Circles and from the Business Nuclei.

The Provincial Congress meets only once every two years when it outlines the general provincial program and elects the Provincial Committee, which then takes the responsibility of the movement from one Congress to the next. The Provincial Committee is really a small parliament for guiding, delineating the program, determining the directives of the movement, but it does not exercise executive powers. Executive authority is held by the Council of the Presidency, which is the major animating and propulsive force of the Province. Although the Provincial Committee meets only every two or three months, the Council of the Presidency meets weekly and its members devote part or all of their time each day to their job. The Council is composed of: the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Administrator, several Counsellors, A Female ACLI delegate and two Young ACLI delegates.50

The Region

Between the Province and the National Office is another large step. To facilitate the rapport between the Provinces and National headquarters, ACLI have

49 ACLI Milano, XI Congresso, p. 32.

50 Le ACLI, Principi, p. 80.
introduced the Region which gathers together a number of Provinces which naturally group together because of historic, economic, or other reasons. The Region is another effort on the part of ACLI towards organizational decentralization. The Regional Committee, composed of the Province Presidents of the Region, has the job of studying regional problems, coordinating the Provinces towards a unified action in the solution of the problems, and electing a Regional President.

In 1957 there were eighteen Regions ranging in size from Lombardia with 213,464 Acliists to Trentino-Alto Adige with 45,560 members.

The National Central Office

The National Central Office of ACLI is the top level of the organization. It unites all other levels of both the vertical and horizontal structures of ACLI and it has the general direction of the whole movement. The largest central organ is the National Congress, in which participate delegates from all the ACLI organizations and which meets every two years in order to fix the general directives of the movement and to elect the National Council. The National Council meets periodically following the decisions of the Congress and the norms of the Statutes, determines the general program, the major projects and goals of the movement, and elects the Central Presidency, ACLI's top executive organ.

The Central Presidency has the permanent responsibility for the movement and actuates what has been decided upon by the deliberative organs. It included the President, Vice-President, Secretary, Administrator, and five Counsellors. The Female ACLI delegate and the Young ACLI delegate play consultative roles in the Presidency.

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The national officers elected in November, 1956, were:

President . . . . . Honorabile Dino Penazsato  
Vice-Presidents . . . Honorabile Giovanni Bersani  
Honorable Alessandro Butte  
Doctor Giuseppe Rizzo  
Secretary . . . . . Mister Vittorio Pozzer  
Administrator : . . . Honorabile Alcide Berloffa  
Counsellors . . . . . Professor Enrico Alba  
Doctor Goffredo Nannini  
Doctor Livio Labor  
Mister Bruno Fronta  
Honorabile Giuseppe Cali

Organizational Specializations of ACLI

We have seen ACLI's general organizational structure with their vertical groups based on the categories and their horizontal unifying levels making ACLI one large family of Catholic workers. However, there are three special classes of workers for whom ACLI have outlined special programs of organization and formation to fit their own particular needs and problems. These groups are: women workers, young workers, and farmers.

Feminine Commissions

First of all let us consider the Italian women workers. According to recent statistics, 30% of the Italian women of working age are included in the work force.53 ACLI have done much to aid them, as we see in the Statutes:

Near the Workers' Circle a Feminine Commission regulated the activities which are proper to women. This Commission is elected by the female members of the Circle and in turn elects its own delegate. The delegates from the Circles elect a Provincial Feminine Commission

52 ACLI, Relazione Generale, 1957, p. 32.

which elects its own Provincial Delegate. The Provincial Delegates, in turn, elect the Central Feminine Commission for the study of the problems of women workers and the outlining of programs of activity in the area of their jurisdiction in line with the general direction of the movement. This Central Commission elects from its members the Central Delegate to the National Council of ACLI.54

Thus on all levels the Feminine Commissions are present to stand up for the rights of the Italian women workers.

Since the ACLI are mixed, the fundamental goals of the women members are the same as those of the men: namely, reconstruction of the social order along the lines of Christian doctrine, an integral formation, social services such as co-ops, vocational training, etc. Women members participate in ACLI with equal rights and responsibilities along with the men. However, they have particular problems and needs of their own, whether because of the conditions of work, or because of their own psychological makeup. The women's activities within ACLI are good examples of specialization within the associations to meet the needs of a particular group. Here the specialization is more in activity than in organizational form. The Feminine Section is not, then, another Circle for there is only one Circle in each locality; rather it is an area in which women's activities are promoted.55 The following reports from the First National Women's Congress of ACLI, July 16 to 19, 1949, give some idea of the areas in which the women's Section of ACLI operates. The following were topics of discussion:

1. The ACLI, a social movement of Catholic workers, and the functions of women in ACLI.
2. The situation of female workers in Italy.
3. The situation of female workers in agriculture.

54ACLJ, Statuto, p. 11.
1. Women's activities in ACLI.
2. The situation of female workers in offices and in commerce.
3. The needs of the worker's family.56

In 1957 the female Aclists held their Fourth National Congress in which they claimed that their number had reached 300,000 with all the categories represented. Women workers from the industries of the North and from the agricultural areas of the South were in good numbers as were members who were domestics and office workers. As yet the movement has gained little headway in the commercial field. The Fourth National Congress had been preceded by seventy-three regular Provincial Congresses, twenty-five more than the previous national congress.

Women farm workers are a class that has been helped especially by ACLI. Among other works in 1956-1957 there were 250 courses in sewing, cooking, etc., sponsored by ACLI. In order to obtain homogeneity in teaching, ACLI published the text, "The Home and the Rural Business." Help was given to the migrant workers, olive, grape, and fruit pickers who are easily taken advantage of by unscrupulous farmers.57

Women domestic workers enjoy a certain autonomy within ACLI and have their own specialized organization which, however, is always in collaboration with the Feminine Commissions. These Groups of Domestic Workers are in evidence in almost every province. They held their Second National Convention in Rome on December 17 and 18, 1955. Regional sessions have been held especially in areas of need such as Sardinia and Southern Italy. Interregional pilgrimages are common,

56 ACLI, Le Lavoratrici Nelle ACLI, p. 45.
57 ACLI, Relazione Generale, 1957, p. 127.
for example, the National Pilgrimage to Lucca where the domestic workers paid honor to their patroness, St. Zita. A National School for Domestic Workers began in 1958 at the National Center in Bergamo where future domestics are trained in their occupation along with a good moral and social formation to fit the needs of their work.58

**Young Aclists**

The young workers of Italy constitute a class which needs much guidance and formation. To satisfy this need, ACLI founded "Young Aclists," another organizational specialization of the movement. "Young Aclists" are governed by regulations proposed by the Youth Congress and approved by the National Council. All members of the working classes, both young men and young women under twenty-five years of age are eligible for membership. Young Aclists are divided into male and female sections which elect respective commissions which in turn, nominate proper delegates. The male and female delegates then elect respective Central Commissions for the study of problems of young workers and for the outlining of programs of activity squared with the general aims of the ACLI movement. Each Central Commission chooses from among its members a Central Delegate who takes part in the National Council of ACLI with a deliberative vote.59

The Young Aclists are the first form of ACLI with which the Italian youth become acquainted. The participation of the youth in the general activities of the movement is necessary, but this is not the prime need. The primary need is their participation in specific activities of the Young Aclists according to the

58 *ACLI, Relazione Generale*, 1957, pp. 131-133.
59 *ACLI, Statuto*, pp. 15-16.
needs of their particular age group. As they grow up, the young workers are placed more and more in the common activities of the movement. Without this youth training division ACLI would be lost, for there must be formative groups to feed young members into the parent organization.

The Young Aclists study the problems peculiar to young Italian workers and the solutions proposed are carried out by them with the aid of the whole movement. Moreover, they seek to attract, without force, other young workers, to penetrate their environment, and, in general, to influence the youth in the world of work. Youth are the future of ACLI. From the youth of the movement will come the properly trained leaders of the future. 60

The Ecclesiastical Assistants, special Catholic chaplains of the movement, take a particular interest in the training of the Young Aclists. Many young workers are attracted to ACLI by material advantages such as co-op stores, organized sports and vacations, vocational training and the like, and are reluctant to take any part in the Aclist apostolate of renewing the social order or in any other form of Catholic Action. These young Aclists need a special formation and a more intense religious instruction than that given to the adult workers for the obvious reason that the young are in a period of difficult spiritual maturity. Moreover, they are not yet in charge of a family, nor are they taking on responsibilities in the political and economic life and thus have more time at their disposal and greater receptive possibilities for the formation which is so necessary for their development into leaders in the world of work. Some examples of their religious training are: lessons in the Church liturgy with

60 Le ACLI, Principi, pp. 90-92.
special emphasis on the Mass, spiritual exercises, short retreats, religious instructions, moral guidance in such matters as dating, movies, etc. 61

The total membership of Young Aclists in 1957 was 170,000 with functioning Youth Commissions in seventy Provinces. Courses given especially for Young Aclists at the Central School during 1956-1957 were as follows: two courses for young cooperators, one course for young teachers, three courses for leaders. Finally, the Young Aclists publish bi-weekly "Forze Nuove," which has come out in a new form better suited to the needs of young workers. Subscriptions are increasing every year. 62

ACLI-Terra

ACLI gives special attention to yet a third class of workers, those who till the soil. This specialized section is called, "ACLI-Terra." ACLI-Terra collects all the categories of those who work the land, namely, farmers, sharecroppers, small proprietors, tenant farmers, employers and employees, and even agricultural technicians. Each of these acts as a normal Group of the Category, yet together they constitute ACLI-Terra, a unified movement of the Catholic farmers in the picture of a very vast social movement of all the Catholic workers. There seems to be more of a feeling of solidarity among farmers than is seen in other fields of endeavor. ACLI-Terra gives itself to the common needs and rights of the farmer which are peculiar to the farm environment.

Very often in rural zones, where the Workers' Circles are formed almost exclusively of farmers, they take on the characteristics of ACLI-Terra Circles.

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62 ACLI, Relazione Generale, 1957, p. 139.
But even where many different categories are joined together and yet there are farmers in notable numbers, the Circle seeks to adapt itself to the proper needs of the farmers.

The activities of ACLI-Terra are especially directed towards larger land problems such as agrarian reform, the distribution of uncultivated or poorly cultivated land to the co-ops, and the spread of professional agricultural instruction. However, it does not limit itself solely to the larger problems, for it also works on limited questions pertaining to single zones or country localities and penetrates even to dairy farms and smaller tracts, creating ACLI-Terra nuclei and spreading ACLI works of social assistance for example, vocational instruction, to meet the needs of the individual farmers.63

The National Convention of ACLI-Terra held in Rome in 1950 occupied itself mainly with problems of land reform, social assistance, and vocational instruction. Its final motion called for stringent agricultural reforms, encouraged further discussion of the progress of reform so far, especially in the legislation regarding farm contracts. Moreover, farm co-ops were strongly encouraged and the need for better housing and vocational instruction in agriculture was restated.

Some activities of ACLI-Terra in the Province of Milan during the past few years have been: conventions in the zones, statistical studies of illiteracy in the rural areas, residential courses of instruction, regional conventions, vocational courses in agriculture, a mobile unit of the Secretariate to bring the social services, legal advice, medical examinations, etc., to people in remote

63 Le ACLI, Principi, pp. 72-74.
areas, and special activities among the migrant workers. Vocational courses covered a variety of subjects from dairy farming to the use and repair of modern farm equipment. 64

In this chapter we have seen ACLI's matter and form, namely, their membership consisting of the Italian workers, male and female, young and old, and of all different occupations. We have seen the structural forms which ACLI take, namely, the vertical structure based on the workers' occupational categories and the horizontal structure divided according to Circle, Zone, Province, Region, and Nation and embracing all the ACLI members from all the different categories on each level. Finally, we reviewed the special organizational forms of ACLI for women workers, youth, and farmers.

64 ACLI-Milano, XI Congresso, pp. 53-58.
CHAPTER V

THE FUNCTIONS OF ACLI

Having seen the structure of ACLI, we will now turn to the various functions of the associations, namely, organizing and training their members, social action, and social services.

ACLI Organizing

How are the Italian workers organized into ACLI groups? In the previous chapter we saw that one method of ACLI organizing was to increase membership in the Young Acclists which trains the young working people of Italy and readies them to enter the parent organization, ACLI. But how are adults recruited? ACLI have found that the best time for recruiting membership includes the months of October, November, and December because this is the beginning of the social season when people are settled down from their summer vacations and are more inclined to attend meetings, etc., and because in this period members are largely free from other obligations. In fact, where concerted action was brought to bear through propaganda and penetration during this three month time, ACLI Circles met with flattering success. In a short time they were able to terminate the membership drive and turn their attention to formation and other functions of the movement. Organizing is a function of all the divisions of ACLI, but
principally the basic units of the Circle and the Nucleus, under the guidance of the Province. Bearing this out, ACLI-Milano found that although most of the Province registered an increase in membership in 1957, they had dropped from 49,062 members in 1956 to 46,210 in 1957. Of this drop in membership, 2,025 were women and 827 were men. In spite of the great success of their many social activities and social services, the ACLI-Milano, nevertheless, felt the regress, and upon investigation, found that the responsibility fell on the advisors and directors of the Circles who had cut back or retarded excessively the membership activities or who under-valued the importance of the numerical growth of ACLI.65

ACLI-Milano uses annual conventions and visits to the Circles in order to bring about a more effective organization in the Province. Annual conventions for the Presidents of the Circles treat of organizational problems of a general nature, whereas annual assemblies for the social attachées, (ACLI Patronato), for professional instruction delegates, (ENAIP), for delegates of economic and recreational activities treat more of the specific problems of the single activities.

Visits to the Circles in order to check up on the organizational activities are had every three months, in January, April, July, and September. These are particularly useful since they allow fifty or more ACLI leaders to see personally the accomplishments and the deficiencies of the various Circles and to clarify in their own minds some of the practical problems of the movement such as membership, daily social assistance, attendance at courses, etc.66

66Ibid.
Although in 1957 a few Provinces such as Milan showed a decrease in membership due perhaps to negligence on the part of the Circles, nevertheless, the movement as a whole registered 1,015,700 members, an increase of 115,300 over 1955. Since growth is an indication of health we might conclude that, in general, ACLI organizing is good.

**ACLI Training**

The very nature of ACLI is that they are a permanent school of the social life. ACLI members, both men and women, are not only engaged in works of social action, but also are constantly training themselves for social action so that we can say that ACLI formation is both in action and for action.

On June 29, 1948, in his talk to the workers of Rome and of the province, Pope Pius XII affirmed:

> You ought always to have before your eyes the high purpose to which your movement has always aimed, namely, the formation of truly Catholic workers who excel in their skill in practicing their arts and in their religious consciousness. Let them learn to harmonize the protection of their economic interests with a right sense of justice and with a sincere desire of collaborating with other classes of society for the Catholic renewal of the social life.

We bless these efforts and especially the courses and lessons so well organized, moreover, we bless the priests and laity, who give their time and energy as teachers. So great is the need of methodic formation that is attractive and adapted to local circumstances, that there will never be enough done in this field.

Thus, Pius XII pointed out the high place that ACLI formation or training should have in the program for social reconstruction.

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In the Fourth National Congress of ACLI at Naples in 1953 was emphasized the task of transforming the whole movement "into a school of formation," that is, bringing the workers to a human and a Christian maturity so that their social obligations would follow naturally from their duties as Christians. It is the conviction of ACLI that all their methods and all their activities should be a school of formation based on the philosophical, religious, and social principles of Catholic doctrine.69

Religious Formation

Since, then, ACLI formation is based on Catholic principles, religious training should be an important part of the program. In the Statutes we read, "One of the principal aims of ACLI is to care for the religious and moral formation of the workers."70 For this purpose, ACLI, under article 36 of the Statutes, maintains:

The Workers’ Circles and the diocesan, provincial, regional and central organs, each has an Ecclesiastical Assistant, named by a competent authority. The Ecclesiastical Assistant takes care that the activities of the Associations are developed in harmony with the principles of Christian morals and with the directives of the Church. He attends to the religious education and elevation of the members in conformity with Article 2 (quoted above).71

Much has been written on these Ecclesiastical Assistants, or priest-chaplains of ACLI. Since we are concerned primarily with the formation of the workers, we will not discuss the large and successful training courses for clerics

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69 Reina, p. 55.

70 ACLI, Statuto, pp. 1-2.

71 Ibid., p. 16.
engaged in this work.\footnote{72}{An interesting report on the training of Ecclesiastical Assistants may be found in Per Una Cultura Sociale del Clero, published by the Central Office of ACLI Assistants, Rome, 1956.}

Are the workers of Italy in need of religious training and rejuvenation?

A recent study of this was made during the National Congress of Ecclesiastical Assistants of ACLI held at Rome in 1957. Priests had conducted investigations in several factories on the economic, political, and religious conditions of the workers. One reported in part:

The machine shops are terrible! Assembly line work is monotonous and heavy . . . There are great differences in the economic numbers of workers . . . . The greater number of workers are members of the Communist or Socialist parties. The management is generous towards religious initiatives, but does not tolerate the presence of a priest in the factory. Only 7\% or 10\% of the workers go to Sunday Mass, 25\% make their Easter duty.\footnote{73}{"Religious Crisis Among Italian Workers Studied," Social Action Notes for Priests, (October-November, 1957), 10.}

Another priest reported from Rome:

92\% of the workers believe in God, but only 12\% know their elementary prayers . . . . Mistrust of the clergy seems to be general. 75\% acknowledge that the priest is competent enough through his general culture and the spiritual life of his vocation, but they accuse the priests of siding with the rich. Militant Catholics are afraid of finding themselves in too small and isolated numbers. However, almost all the workers take part in religious missions, 35\% attend lenten services, 80\% fulfill their Easter duty.\footnote{74}{Ibid., 11.}

Although there was an improvement in Rome over other parts of Italy in religious fervor, still the overall picture showed the need for much improvement.

In concluding their convention, the Ecclesiastical Assistants suggested that
steps be taken within ACLI on the economic and social planes and in the works of assistance to help bring the workers back to a full rejuvenation of their religious practice. Moreover, they recommended that pastoral methods be changed to meet the changing conditions of the workers' lives. Priests should be especially trained to labor among the workers and laymen selected and trained morally and technically to help in this work.

Italy, although a Catholic country, needs a vital rejuvenation of its religious life especially to make itself strong against the wiles of Communism. How can religion and work be integrated? This is one of the main problems of ACLI religious formation, namely, how to train the worker to realize in his work a means of religious perfection to be integrated with his formal worship, his prayers and devotions. Monsignor Santo Quadri, the Pro-Central Assistant of ACLI has this to say of the spirituality of the worker:

Christian asceticism teaches us that the master way to perfection and sanctity is in fulfilling the duties of our proper state of life. The worker, then, ought to make himself holy by fulfilling his duties as a worker. He ought to sanctify himself as a worker, not in spite of being a worker, for being a worker, in the full sense of the word, places him in conditions of becoming truly holy.

What are the duties of the proper state as applied to the worker? We must be precise in this that the worker sanctify himself as a worker not only by the material fatigue of work, but also by his active participation in social life. In the duty of the state of the worker are included not only vocational activities in the strict sense, but also social action in its very full meaning, family, community, syndicate, politics, etc. 75

The worker then should sanctify himself in the environment of his job, but also outside the factory in his home, and in his participation in trade union and in

the political life of his country.

What does ACLI do to bolster the spiritual life of its members? First of all, it is the job of every Circle to promote regular religious instruction courses in which are covered the principle lessons of the catechism. Many are attracted to ACLI by the material benefits, such as co-ops, vacation services, vocational training, etc., which are available to members, and many of these are in need of religious formation. ACLI religion courses today carry an apologetic twist, bringing up objections against religion, Catholic morals, the Church, the Pope, clerics, etc., that tend to come up in the environment of work.76

ACLI use the liturgy of the Church as a basic means for the spiritual development of their members. A more meaningful participation in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is encouraged. Other means of spiritual training are: retreats for workers, days of prayer and recollection, celebration of various feasts of the Church, especially the Feast of St. Joseph the Worker.77

Social Formation

Social formation is next on the scale of ACLI training. This is accomplished through social conferences and lessons. For example, in all the Circles every year there is a course of social culture for all the members which follows two orders of lessons: social instructions and discussions in which the members take part. Other efforts at social formation are: social weeks open to all the workers, study sessions of one or more days, visits to particular industries.

77 Ibid., 83-92.
The Social School is a permanent institution promoted by the Provincial Offices in the main cities of the province where it conducts one or more courses every year on social questions of a general or a particular nature. For example, in 1955-1957 the Milan Province promoted 225 meetings, attended by over 5,000 Aktists to discuss social problems. Some of the topics covered were: Local Democracy and Administrative Elections, Family Wage, Communism, Women Workers in ACLI, Vanoni Plan for Industrial Recovery, The Social Doctrine of Pius XII, Our Anti-Communism, Wage Policies of CISL, etc.\(^\text{78}\) For practical problems of a social nature the ACLI have Commissions of study formed by directors and technicians who focus on current problems, collect the solutions of the basic groups, and orientate the general social policies of the movement.

**Leader Formation**

Leader formation is an important branch of ACLI training. Schools for leaders, directors, and propagandists are recommended, if not in Circles, at least in the higher divisions. Moreover, there are special weeks and tridua of study especially during the summer months. Most of the efforts towards leadership training are promoted by the regional and the national offices.

Here are some statistics on courses for leader formation promoted by the Central School in 1956-1957. In this period 1,185 leaders attended 42 courses:

- 6 courses for Masters of ACLI Formation
- 2 courses for Organizing Secretaries
- 3 courses for Young Aktist Leaders
- 7 courses for Feminine Activity Leaders
- 6 courses for ACLI-Terra Leaders
- 5 courses for ENAIP Leaders
- 5 courses for Leaders in the Patronato

\(^\text{78}\)ACL-I-Milano, XI Congresso, p. 64.
2 courses for Nucleus Leaders
6 courses for Leaders in Co-ops, Recreational Activities, etc.79

These efforts were conducted at the national level. The provinces were also active in this period conducting 136 elementary courses for Masters of ACLI Formation in 72 provinces. Residential leader courses, conducted mostly during the summer months rose to the number of 184 in 75 provinces with 5,562 Aclists participating in 1956, while in 1957 there were 200 courses, approximately, with 6,400 in attendance.80

The Provincial Presidencies are encouraged not only to promote directly formation on the provincial level, but also to orientate, coordinate, and stimulate formation in the local units of ACLI. In this same vein, the Central Presidency has subsidized the bulletin, "Le ACLI," which in each issue contains a national theme for the monthly social lesson. Here are some of the themes published in 1956-1957:

- Politics of Petroleum in Italy.
- Our Anti-Communism
- The ACLI Guide of the Working Classes.
- Scholastic Politics in Italy.
- Towards Economic Programming.
- Industrial Democracy.
- Automation.
- Education of Adults.
- Workers and Problems of State in Italy.81

One can see ACLI's wide range of social interest by studying these topics.

One of the basic textbooks used in leader training in the Milan Province is called, "Il Libro del Militante Aclista," and covers such diverse topics as:

80 Ibid., 56.
81 Ibid., 58.
history of the worker movement, principles of syndical action, the Italian political life, and the spirituality of a militant Aclist.82

ACLI training, then, covers the three main divisions of spiritual, social, and leader formation. It is only through a thorough training that ACLI can hope to make real progress in their apostolate of the social reconstruction of the Italian working world.

**ACLI Social Action**

Having seen the ACLI functions of organizing and training, we will now investigate their apostolate of social action. In this it would be good to note that ACLI do not tend to activities in their apostolate that they would limit exclusively to Catholic workers or which they would promote solely for the advantage of all the working classes. For example, when ACLI promote a reform in the business world, they do not want to reform business only for the Catholic workers, but for all the workers. In general problems of social reform, it would be impossible to think of a reform of structure valid only for one part of the workers.

In renewing the social order for all, ACLI use social means. Here we will consider first of all general social actions, sometimes of a more ideological nature, which pertain to politics, syndicates, and broad social and economic plans. Not all social actions of ACLI are limited to the ideological order, however, for some touch also particular and local problems. Unemployment, for example, is a general problem. But it is also a particular problem for each locality, category, or group. It can often be attacked best with local efforts,

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which, even if they do not solve the problem, at least bring the gravity of the situation to the attention of all.

ACLI follow the economic and social problems of each province and of each section of the country. Moreover, they receive information from and work through their local and provincial divisions. The openings and closings of businesses, the carrying out of public works, the effectiveness of local administrations, the efficiencies of public works and services, all these are important in the life of the worker and in all these ACLI take a lively interest.\(^{83}\)

In our discussion of ACLI training we saw the broad social interest of the associations ranging all the way from automation to anti-Communism.

The campaign for Business Democracy is a good example of ACLI discussion and planning in the social action field. The question of worker participation in the decisions of business is a delicate one. Of this the Central President of ACLI said:

\[\text{This campaign is a big job. Moreover, the Catholic workers assume a great responsibility because they do not wish only to denounce and theorize, rather to realize the business democracy in fact. They place themselves in business and in social life with force to realize in solidarity, in collaboration, and in initiative not only a new climate of labor relations, but a concrete citizenship of the worker in business.}^{84}\]

As yet business democracy is still in the long-range planning and discussion stage, but it might serve as an example of the ideological nature of some of the ACLI social action.

\(^{83}\)ACL\textsc{I}, Principi, pp. 32-33.

\(^{84}\)ACL\textsc{I}, Relazione Generale, 1957, p. 69.
Syndical Action

ACLI social action includes all that concerns the economic and social life of the Italian workers. A most important aspect of this economic-social life is the syndicate or trade union. In the early days of ACLI existence, as we saw in Chapter II, syndical action was the most prominent division of ACLI social action. In those days ACLI called themselves, "Expressions of the Catholic Syndical Currents." In the days after World War II when one, large unified syndicate ruled the Italian working world, syndical action was of very great importance, especially when the Communists began to infiltrate the syndicate and to use it for their own diabolical purposes. We saw how ACLI syndical action was instrumental in breaking up the Communist dominated CGIL and forming the Christian Democratic LCGIL, later CISL. ACLI continue to support CISL and act as a leaven in the syndicate training Catholic leaders to take part in the syndical life. Giulio Pastore, head of the LCGIL at its inception, received his training in ACLI where he was head of the Social Services Section.85

Here it would be to the point to clarify again to the reader the position of ACLI in regard to the syndicate. ACLI do not constitute a syndicate or a part of a syndicate, rather they are Catholic Associations of Italian Workers existing alongside the unions. It is true that members of ACLI belong to the union and take part in it. However, the ACLI as a formal organization are not a part of the union, nor are they Catholic unions, but are Catholic social action groups which co-exist with the trade unions according to the mind of Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius XI.

Here are some ACLI functions pertaining to the syndicates as outlined by ACLI themselves. First, ACLI form the workers for syndical life. They urge their members not only to join the syndicate, but also to participate actively in the syndical life with a conscious preparation that is both moral and technical.

Second, ACLI guide the workers in their choice of a syndicate, using as guides the directives of the Extraordinary Congress and the guarantee that the syndicate understands these principles: respect for the moral law and for the principles that affirm the dignity of the human person, the application of democratic principles to the syndicate, and the independence of the influence of political party or government.

Third, ACLI do not concern themselves directly with current syndical problems, but rather leave to each worker the carrying out of his contribution according to his preparation and his Catholic convictions.

Fourth, ACLI, as a representative body of the Catholic workers, maintain in regard to the syndicate a general orientating function.

Fifth, ACLI insist that their members be among the first and most active supporters of syndical life so that the syndicate, an essential instrument for the elevation of the workers, fortifies itself and becomes more and more effective in the defense of the workers.86

In the Sixth National Congress of ACLI in 1957 the associations again confirmed their faith in CISL which has dedicated itself to safeguarding the interests of the workers. However, ACLI reserved the right to criticize CISL and

86 ACLI, Principi, pp. 36-37.
brought up the fact that, de facto, CISL had not contributed much to the contractual power of the workers, although this may have been the result of environmental and historic circumstances more than of any deficiency on the part of CISL.87

**Political Action**

Besides their functions in the syndical order, ACLI are also active politically, for politics constitute an important phase of the social order. ACLI are not a political party, rather they are independent of every political faction. Nor do they develop directly a political action, but they cannot certainly be disinterested in that part of politics which regards the interests of the workers, which concerns the economic life of the country, or which touches upon social problems. If ACLI should be indifferent to these problems and to the political activities which pertain to them, they would fail to be instruments of social renewal, in a word, they would not be ACLI. Although ACLI are not a political party and do not assume direct responsibility in public organizations, nevertheless, they propose to make the influence of the workers felt in these areas.

The Sixth National Congress of ACLI felt that a distinction should be made between formal and substantial democracy:

Democracy should not be a simple formal expression of universal suffrage, but an active, conscious, and free participation by all levels and particularly by the working classes in the co-responsibility in the development of the democratic state according to the republican constitutions.88


88Ibid., 59.
The Congress further maintained that there does not now exist in Italy a true democracy in this full and complete sense. Among the causes impeding the evolution of Italy towards a true democratic form were listed: a lack of carrying out the norms of the constitutions concerning elementary instruction, and the discipline of economic activity.89

What is the present position of ACLI towards the political situation in Italy today? Here is what the ACLI leaders are taught in their training courses in the Milan Province.

The present political choice is not only between democracy and antidemocracy, (black and red). In this choice the position of the Catholic workers is clear. They are for democracy, for the full actuation of our republican constitution, and against any resurgence of totalitarianism. They are, then, democratic forces by virtue of a free moral choice. However, another choice arises and this within the ambit of the democratic forces.

The 'Democratic forces,' economically, socially, and politically include diverse forces, namely, the conservatives, the progressives, and those in the middle, 'centro.' Merely to accept democracy is not all, since in democracy it is necessary to accept the proper role. Where do the Catholic workers fit into the democratic scheme? Their position is clear since the Catholic workers should be a progressive force. Actually all the democratic works should be progressive forces of democratic progress. To refute the Communist revolutionary solutions is not to abdicate the role of dynamic force. The workers must act for a progressive renewal of the social order.

In the democratic scheme do the Catholic workers constitute the 'left'? Yes, provided one avoids every equivocation of this term. The terminology of right, center, and left concerns politics directly, but implies also other problems even beyond the economic. If by the left one means the desire to actuate the postulates of the Encyclicals and the Messages of the Holy Father, then the Catholic workers under the leadership of ACLI are to the left.90

89Reina, p. 60.

90ACLI-Milano, II Libro, pp. 207-208.
ACLI further outline their political role:

In Italy, for complex reasons, there does not exist a large democratic party of work, since one cannot say that the Communist Party or the Socialist Party offer sufficient guarantee of being an autonomous party independent of Communism. For Catholic workers it is impossible to adhere to it because of its marked Marxist stamp that makes it a party of materialistic inspiration. In spite of this, the workers, and in particular the Catholic workers can be active in Italian political life. And since their presence is indispensable to the development of democracy and social life and progress, the significance of Catholic work organizations and movements is easily seen. Their prime and fundamental function is to guide the workers in the proper choice of political and economic and social solutions, and even more important, in the election of men sympathetic to the interests, attentions, and the spiritual and material needs of the workers.91

In a word, ACLI in their political functions are the "Guide of the working classes," directing them in the choice of a progressive democracy which will act through legislation, government programs, and the like for a positive reconstruction of the social order in Italy.

The growth of the Christian Democratic Party has closely paralleled the growth of ACLI. Both are founded on Christian social principles and both have been active in Italian post-war social reconstruction in which they tend to corroborate each other.

Economic and social politics interest ACLI directly for this part of the political life of Italy is chiefly concerned with social reconstruction covering such problems as: national production, common European market, unemployment, government plans for aiding the national economy, taxes, social assistance, agrarian reforms, housing, credit restrictions, etc. In all of these problems ACLI attempt to make their social influence felt in the political field.

ACL Social Services

ACL social action, as we have seen, is broad, often ideological in nature, and pertains to general, long-term policies in the social, economic, syndical and political fields. ACL social services, on the other hand, are practical aids, for example: social welfare, tourist guides or vocational training, planned by ACLI to meet the immediate needs of the workers. The social services integrate and complete the social and formative activities of the associations so that the coordinated unity of these three sections touches the whole life of the worker.

The principle social services are: social assistance or Patronato; professional or vocational instruction, known as ENAIP; recreational service; and economic activities such as co-ops.

Before going into detail in describing these services, let us pause for a moment to consider the value of social services. The social services are concrete works of immediate usefulness; whereas the social action is gradual and long-range, and ACLI formation many times falls on deaf ears, the social services have an immediate eloquence. Workers see the results of the social services and are attracted to ACLI and its program of social reconstruction.

Patronato-ACLI

The first social service of ACLI is social welfare, commonly known as Patronato. According to Article 35 of the Statutes:

The ACLI operate the Patronato for the social services of the worker with Central Headquarters, Provincial Offices, and Secretariats near the local Circles. Patronato-ACLI works for the interpretation and
fulfillment of social legislation and is regulated by its proper Statutes. 92

"The advocate of the people," is the slogan sometimes applied to Patronato-ACLl and is a concise way of expressing the legal and medical counsel that the Catholic workers' movement places at the service of the workers to encourage them to follow up on all the benefits which are legally theirs. The widow who claims a pension for herself and for her children, the unemployed worker who demands compensation, the old worker who, unable to work, seeks a pension, these are the ones the Patronato wishes to help. 93

Social legislation in Italy today offers assistance and insurance against certain risks which would deprive the worker of his capacity to work and of the wage which is his means of life, for example: insurance covering sickness, disease, TB, unemployment, pensions, family aid, etc. Many of the workers do not know these laws or do not understand them since they are quite complex. For instance, many do not know their insurance rights. On the other hand, some know the laws, but do not make use of them because the necessary red tape is long and tedious. Consequently, the workers need assistance in the explanation of these administrative and medico-legal practices. This is the service that ACLl render to the workers by means of the Patronato.

ACLl have established a Patronato in all the ninety-one Provinces of Italy with the Central Patronato at Rome. In communities where the Workers' Circles exist, the Secretariate of the People is connected with the Circle which is in a central location. But the Secretariate also flourishes in localities which do

92ACLI, Statuto, p. 16.
93ACLI, Idee, p. 35.
not have Circles and so is able to have its own autonomous life. Patronato-ACLI obtained juridical recognition by decree of the Minister of Work and of Social Welfare on December 29, 1947.24

One important phase of Patronato activity is the assistance of emigrants who are helped in completing various procedures necessary for departure and are aided in the country of immigration, where if left to themselves, they easily become objects of exploitation and so often lack the comforts that are necessary for decent living. For this reason ACLI have established Secretariates in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Luxemburg, Germany, Holland, Canada, and Venezuela.95

Patronato-ACLI publishes a monthly review entitled, "Informationi Sociali." Moreover, the social assistance offered to the workers through the Patronato and the other social services of ACLI is given with a Christian spirit so that it is useful not only to the material well-being, but also to the moral life of the worker. Christian charity through the body arrives at the soul.

How many does ACLI employ in the service of the Patronato? In 1955 there were 594 employees at the disposition of the workers in the ninety-two Provincial Offices and in the Secretariates functioning on the local level. There were 162 social doctors, 650 consulting specialists, and 460 legal consultants also offering their services. In the Fall of 1955 there was a network of almost 8,000 Secretariates of the People. Patronato growth is shown by the fact that in 1945, at the very beginning, 75,000 services were rendered, whereas 1,588,086

24ACL, Principi, p. 51.
95ACL, Relazione Generale, 1957, p. 106.
services were given in 1954 and 1,826,000 in 1956 when the number of Secretariats grew to 8,180.

Here are some examples of case work done in the Milan Province in 1956 with the number of cases expressed immediately after each.

Industrial and farm accidents and occupational illnesses . . . . 2,715
Pensions for the sick and aged ........................................ 9,924
Family allowances ......................................................... 1,206
Social and unemployment insurance ................................... 9,901
TB and various other sicknesses ..................................... 1,105
Post-war assistance .......................................................... 230
Emigration .................................................................... 28
Varia ........................................................................... 1,346

A total of 26,464 cases were finished up in 1956; whereas 22,133 cases were opened the same year. In legal recourse cases in 1956, 3,521 reached the courts and decisions were given in 2,921 cases of which 63% were for the workers and 37% against. Medical consultation was given in 5,786 cases by specialists ranging from oculists to neurologists.

An interesting addition to the Patronato-ACLI of the Milan Province is an Autosecretariate for visiting out-of-the-way places in the province. This traveling Secretariate in a period of six months visited fifty-five different country places, some more than once, for a total of 264 visits covering 2,843 cases including medical examinations, x-rays, social help, legal advice, etc. Social help is badly needed in the rural areas and especially among the migrant workers.

97 ACLI, Relazione Generale, 1957, p. 103.
98 ACLI-Milano, XI Congresso, pp. 68-70.
ACLI-Milano is a leader in the development of the Patronato as she is in so many other facets of the worker movement.  

**ENAIP**

A second social service of ACLI is the ENAIP or "Ent Nazionale ACLI per L'Instruzione Professionale" or National Organization of ACLI for Vocational Instruction. Why not include this under the ACLI general formation discussed earlier? We have already seen the ACLI formation covering religious, social, and leadership training. But this is a general formation intended for the whole movement; it is broad and long-range. ACLI vocational training, on the other hand, is short-range and aimed at filling an immediate need and so is included under the social services. Vocational instruction has as its aim the perfection of the technical and vocational skills of the workers in order to improve their conditions of life.

Unemployment creates such a problem because it includes so many who have no skill. Furthermore, the technical progress of any economic system is always founded on the participation of skilled workers. Those who have no trade, or who do not know it well, run a risk of remaining outside the ranks of the employed. Vocational skills are useful not only because they increase a worker's knowledge in a certain line, but also because they tend to raise his efficiency and productivity, they bring him a larger salary, and give him more satisfaction in his completed work.

ENAIP branches out into the regular ACLI divisions and is especially active at the Provincial and local levels. It has three major objectives in its work:

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1. ENAIP conducts courses for retraining or requalification for the unemployed. These courses are instituted by law and the Minister of Labor assigns contributions for the expenses of the courses. ACLI submit their plan of courses to the Department of Labor for approval.

2. ENAIP conducts ordinary courses of qualification or specialization which are promoted to increase the vocational skill of the workers or to improve their specialization. These courses are indispensable for passage to a higher grade in the particular industry, for developing a career, for preparing for an examination, etc.

3. Finally, other courses are promoted, especially in the local offices for popular instruction, for the study of foreign languages, for cultural improvement, and for the illiterate and semi-literate.100

In the space of ten years almost 700,000 passed through ACLI courses for vocational instruction. Over the five-year period 1950-1955, 11,851 courses were given with 400,000 students attending. In this period there were fifty centers of vocational instruction established.101

Here is a resume of ENAIP activities for 1956-1957:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Courses</th>
<th>Number of Courses</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Courses for Unemployed</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>7,543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses for Young Workers</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>9,377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses for Apprentices</td>
<td>100,000</td>
<td>10,213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses for Farmers</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>3,683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courses in Rural Domestic Economy</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>3,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popular Schools</td>
<td>383</td>
<td>7,696</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,805</td>
<td>42,322</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open and Self-financed Courses</td>
<td>987</td>
<td>24,675</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the Milan Province during the same period were given 230 courses under the auspices of ENAIP; of these 130 were given by the Province and 100 by the

100 ACLI, Principi, pp. 53-55.
101 ACLI, Idee, p. 37.
102 ACLI, Relazione Generale, 1957, p. 113.
Circles. One hundred and eighty teachers and 4,511 students participated in the program. For apprentices and workers, courses were offered in: industrial preparation, photography, mechanical drawing, radio, electricity, television, movie photography and projection, chemistry, auto mechanics, and railroading. For the women courses were taught in: tailoring, shirt making, family medicine, sewing, cutting and shaping cloth, canning, hygiene, child care, cooking, etc. For white collar workers there were courses in: business administration, industrial organization, banking, stenography, typing, and import-export. Finally, language instructions were given in Italian, French, and English.103

Two more important developments in the Milan Province are: first, the construction in Milan of five laboratories for training in radio, television, electricity, chemistry, and photography. These were built with the blessing and encouragement of Cardinal Montini. Second, there is the vocational boarding school for typographers, electricians, hydraulic and mechanical maintenance men that was recently built near the Castle of Monguzzo in Briana.104

Recreational and Tourist Service

Leaving ENAIP, let us turn to the third social service of ACLI, namely, the Recreational and Tourist Service. Let ACLI explain for themselves why they go into this type of service:

Recreation is a need of nature. After work man needs a break and some rest in order to revamp his strength and renew his energies. Not only is recreation a joy, but it is a source of joy . . . . It is not that the need of social justice in the economic world is not recognized.

103 ACLI Milano, XI Congresso, p. 75.
104 Toldo, Aggiornamenti Sociali, 8 (October 1957), 559.
Firmly convinced of this need, we have already said that social justice, a better distribution of goods and of human value, does not limit itself only to the economic field, but it touches all aspects of life. We have spoken of social justice in culture, we speak now of social justice in recreation. He who works and is fatigued has a right, more than any other, to his rest. No one denies this right or fails to recognize it in theory. But what good is a right when one lacks the practical means of exercising the right? We want the worker to be placed in a position of getting sane recreation. This is obtained by the improvement of economic conditions and by a capable organization of a recreational service. ACLI, associations of workers, have assumed this job.105

Some of the general activities of the ACLI recreational service are:

music or song of bands and choirs, which when well done are means of relaxation and education; the theatre, which embraces simple dramas for men only, still effective in the Italian environment, and mixed dramas and movies, which are a primary source of recreation. ACLI have opened movie houses for the showing of worthwhile films to the workers and their families.

Sports are another division of ACLI recreation. The Circles and nuclei organize games and tournaments of ball, football, cycling, etc. On the Provincial level they organize games and leagues over a wide area. ACLI sports are strictly amateur.106

ACLI Tourist Service is widely used and includes excursions, vacations, trips to new cities or to the mountains or seashore, trips to foreign countries, chiefly Switzerland, Austria, and France. For vacations in the mountains or at the seashore ACLI maintain special hotels. Here the worker and his family are

105ACLI, Principi, p. 55.

106Ibid., 55-61.
offered a moral, secure, and an honest vacation, at the same time economical and comfortable.\textsuperscript{107}

The 338,000 days of summer vacation enjoyed under ACLI auspices in 1955 gave eloquent testimony of the development of the Tourist Service. 28,500 took their holidays in 160 resorts at the disposition of ACLI in Italy and outside the country. Moreover, 2,500 complete families were taken care of to give single families a chance to pass the holidays together. Other ACLI Tourist efforts in 1955 included: 35,000 trips, excursions, and journeys with 1,400,000 participating and 925 trips outside of Italy with 4,625 joining in.\textsuperscript{108} In 1956-1957 320 vacations for the holidays were organized with 96,550 joining in for a total of 840,000 days. Summer camps established by ACLI for the children of workers in the mountains and by the sea now number 90 and handled 54,800 children for a total of 540,000 days present in 1956-1957.\textsuperscript{109} These figures may give some idea of ACLI growth in the tourist and vacation areas of social service.

**Economic Service**

The Economic Service is fourth among ACLI's social aids to the Italian workers. It offers concrete economic help to the workers above all through the cooperating efforts of the workers themselves, generally known as co-operatives. One function of the co-operative is to unite in the same hands both the capital and the worker so that the profits of the enterprise remain with the workers thus eliminating middle men and exploiters.

\textsuperscript{107}ACL\textsuperscript{1}I, Principi, pp. 60-61.
\textsuperscript{108}ACL\textsuperscript{1}I, Idee, pp. 41-42.
\textsuperscript{109}ACL\textsuperscript{1}I, Relazione Generale, 1957, pp. 120-121.
ACLI Economic Service does not only create co-ops, nor merely consumer co-ops, it creates a togetherness of work that permeates the life of the worker and promotes a collegiate system of work that satisfies a notable part of the economic needs of the workers of a zone or section of the country, and transforming bit by bit, it creates a concrete base for a working Christian social order. ACLI have co-ops in stores, dairy farming, housing, restaurants, laboratories, etc. Also, co-operative efforts may be found in boarding houses for workers, hotels, especially those used for summer vacations, agencies for tourists, houses of care, movies, and the like.

There are three large classes of ACLI co-ops. First, are consumers' co-ops, which have the job of offering for sale various consumer goods at reasonable prices and of exercising a calming influence on the market. Second, are the producers' co-ops either in agriculture or in other work, which unites a group of the workers for the exercise of their trade or the co-management of various tracts of land. Third, we find co-op housing, which promotes the construction of useful dwellings to be assigned to the cooperators, avoiding the middle-men and speculators.¹¹⁰

In 1957 there were 50h ACLI consumer co-ops, 216 farm co-ops, 35h building co-ops, and 146 work co-ops.¹¹¹ Some of the consumer co-ops in the Milan Province have been particularly active. In the two year period 1956-1957, the stores run by ACLI in that province grew to 17, forcing many of the tradesmen to cut their prices by 15-20%. Besides the 17 run by the Province, there are

32 other stores run by the local Circles. Notable among these are some of the co-operative eating places provided for the workers. Here are figures for 1956-1957:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Locality of the Restaurant</th>
<th>1956</th>
<th>First Half of 1957</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Via Della Signora, Milano</td>
<td>190,930</td>
<td>136,950</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piazza Cavour, Milano</td>
<td>140,121</td>
<td>145,197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fondazione Belloni, Milano</td>
<td>102,386</td>
<td>82,532</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albergo-Breda, Sesto San Giovanni</td>
<td>106,210</td>
<td>88,846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.N.A.M., S. Donato Milanese</td>
<td>158,773</td>
<td>129,722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total customers</td>
<td>698,416</td>
<td>583,537</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The goodly increase in patronage of these eating places is evidence of their popularity with the workers.

The Fondazione Belloni and the Albergo-Breda are not simple restaurants, but are rather workers' hostels run by the Milan Province. The "Fondazione Angelo e Maria Belloni," named after its founders, is a hostel for young men who come to Milan in order to learn or practice a trade. The building is of recent construction and holds 250 boarders who are kept quite busy except for a brief period of recreation at the end of the day. Besides a decent lodging at a reasonable price, the youths receive religious, moral, and cultural guidance combined with a climate of sane liberty and a vital comprehension of the problems of the young. The Albergo-Breda, when it was first taken over by ACLI-Milano, looked like a barracks, but now it has been transformed to give the boarders more of a family atmosphere. The number of boarders in 1956-1957 averaged 545. These are but a few examples of ACLI's cooperatives which are rather

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113. Ibid.
typical of their work in the field of social action in order to help the workers in a concrete, practical way.

Of ACLI's many social activities, some, such as the vacation resorts and hotels, are self-supporting; others, such as ENAIP, receive government help; still others are aided by private donations and by the dues of the membership. Dues in the Milan Province were L750 a year in 1957.

In this chapter we have reviewed the manifold functions of ACLI, namely: organizing with ACLI techniques to increase membership; training of the members in the religious, social, and leadership areas; social action, including syndical and political participation; and ACLI social services, covering Patronato, ENAIP, and recreational and economic aids to the worker. In a word, ACLI aim to develop the whole man in his religious life, his social life, his vocational training, or his recreation. Truly by renewing their members in an integral manner, ACLI hope to prepare the way for the reconstruction of the social order in Italy.
CHAPTER VI

EVALUATION AND SUMMARY OF ACLI

Are ACLI a success? Are they accomplishing what they set out to do, namely, to reconstruct the social order in Italy along the lines of Christian doctrine? What do the Aclists themselves say of their associations? In 1957 ACLI-Milano conducted a self-examination to see what their own members thought of ACLI. Although the responses were not tabulated statistically in the reviewing article, nevertheless, one can judge the general trends of the responses in order to get some objective view of the movement and its effect on the workers.

The questionnaire was promoted by the Provincial Presidency with a view to preparing a report for the Provincial Congress in the Fall of 1957. The first division of questions covers ACLI political, syndical, administrative, and social action.

A. "Are you satisfied with the orientation of the movement in the political field?" The large majority answered that they were fully satisfied. In particular, no one claimed that ACLI had made a captive choice in the last congress of Christian Democrats. Sixteen claimed that ACLI do too little in the line of politics, whereas only three said that they do too much.

B. "Are you satisfied with the syndical orientation of the movement?" No
one made a criticism in this regard. The large majority insisted on action favoring the syndicates. Some asked for more action to stimulate the syndicates and further suggested the opportuneness of a campaign to re-evaluate the internal commissions.

C. "Do you believe our movement has worked with decision and courage in its social action without falling into unjustified conformism, yet using the necessary prudence?" The large majority responded that ACLI-Milano have worked up to the present with decision and with the necessary prudence. Some said, "Too much prudence," while other maintained that here prudence had been wanting. One answered, "The ACLI are our hope."

D. "Are you satisfied with the ACLI local administrators?" The majority responded that they were satisfied. Not a few maintained that the contacts and coordination with the circles should be increased.114

External dangers to the ACLI movement were also treated in the investigation:

A. "Do you think there are tendencies inside or outside ACLI to change the nature of the Catholic worker movement, confining it exclusively to educational and welfare functions? If this is true, how should ACLI act in order to make the movement acceptable to all in its entirety?" Many admitted these tendencies which for the most part were from the outside of the movement. Others denied it. A few observed that to reduce ACLI exclusively to an educational, welfare, and apostolic organization might be the end of the movement. What are the means of counteracting these tendencies? Some suggested publishing illus-

114Toldo, Aggiornamenti Sociali, 8 (October 1957), 565-567.
treated brochures describing the movement in its entirety. An example of this would be the *Relazione della Presidenza Provinciale*, published after the 11th Congress of ACLI-Milano, September 21-22, 1957.\(^{115}\) A better use of the daily Catholic press would help correct false impressions of ACLI. The fact that some consider ACLI principally a welfare organization is brought out by Adams when he states, "This latter organization, (ACLI), was established to do welfare work among the workers and was technically separate from the Christian Democrats and Catholic Action."\(^{116}\) However, he admits that ACLI were instrumental in breaking away from the Communist dominated syndicate CGIL to form the free syndicate, LCGIL, and this was certainly not a mere welfare operation as we have seen earlier in the paper.

B. "Regarding the dangers from 'Sirens,' do you think that economic autonomy, the guarantee of autonomy of direction of the movement, should be jealously and rigidly guarded by ACLI? In case 'Sirens' at the center or at the periphery offer help to the movement, how do you intend to react?" All answered that the economic autonomy of the movement, one of the advantages of ACLI-Milano, ought to be guarded "jealously and rigidly," repelling the 'Sirens' as false and deceiving. "ACLI believe only in God, Who is powerful and hears willingly the Christian workers. Let us be with Him." Some added that the dignity of ACLI cannot be bought for it is as "Wax in our ears against the Sirens." Others more benignly observed, "To accept the disinterested songs of the Sirens, we do not endanger our liberty." The danger in accepting financial help is a

\(^{115}\)ACLIMilano, XI Congresso.

very real one best expressed by the old adage, "He who pays the piper, calls the tune."

Problems concerning the direction of ACLI were also questioned:

A. "Considering the fact that our movement is in continual and incessant development, do you believe that there is a danger of falling into a 'Bureaucracy without a soul?' If this is true, how do you intend to combat it?" Some denied the existence, while others maintained that bureaucracy could be prevented by formation and vigilance, by greater contact with the basic units, and by giving a social soul to the dependent collaborators who ought to be of pure Aclist faith.

B. "How do you intend to operate so that ACLI functions are carried on substantially by the workers, by laymen with the indispensable and necessary spiritual animation of the Ecclesiastical Assistants?" Many recommended caring more for "the formation of the laity," "leaving to each his own field," "procuring sufficient means so that the Circles need not be dependent on the parishes for their offices," and "allowing the workers to learn by their mistakes since the Catholic working movement is a movement of the laity," finally, "continuing to do as they have done up to the present with good sense and prudence."117 The ACLI constitute a lay movement within the Catholic Church, with full ecclesiastical approval and with spiritual guidance on all levels of their activity by Church authorities. Thus far the movement has worked out well with lay leadership collaborating with Church officials. However, there is real danger, on the one hand, of complete lay authority to the exclusion of any Ecle-

117 Toldo, 567-568.
siastical interference, and, on the other hand, of complete clerical domination with no room left for lay ingenuity and lay leadership. So far the "good sense" and "prudence" mentioned have carried ACLI successfully through the years.

In their self-appraisal of the movement the Aclists of the Milan Province approved of the political action, although claimed more could be done in this area. They approved the ACLI syndical action, some admitted more could be done here, too. Social action was described as having been carried out with prudence and decision up to the present. Local administration was approved, however, more contact and coordination on the part of ACLI with the Circles was recommended. The danger of ACLI being considered a mere welfare group was recognized by all and more publicity was suggested as a means of making ACLI better known in its entirety. The Aclists agreed that the movement should maintain its economic autonomy. The movement, they said, would seem less of a bureaucracy if there were better contact with the Circles and if the social training of the workers were improved. It was generally concluded that the ACLI are a lay movement acting with Ecclesiastical approval, but too much domination by either factor could do harm to the associations. All in all the investigation showed that the membership were in agreement with the general direction and methods of the movement.

Ecclesiastical Approval

What do others outside of the movement think of ACLI? In their early days, as we saw in Chapter II, the associations received Ecclesiastical approval and support. Has this favorable atmosphere perdured?
On September 15, 1949, Pope Pius XII's Acting Secretary of State, Monsignor, now Cardinal, Montini, wrote the following to the Central President of ACLI:

Let ACLI continue with the unanimous and generous support of the clergy and of the lay Catholics, to develop their multiform and beneficent activities in a territory always expanding. And with a well unified combination of assistance and welfare, may they strive to satisfy the religious, moral, and material needs of the Italian workers in a way that they may be assured that the Church, in imitation of its Divine Founder, sincerely desires and seeks the just protection of their rights and interests.

On May 1, 1955, Pius XII spoke the following to members of ACLI on the occasion of his institution of the Feast of St. Joseph, the Workman.

Little more than ten years ago on March 11, 1945, during a difficult period in Italy's history, difficult especially for her working classes, we received the Catholic Associations of Italian Workers (ACLI) in audience for the first time. We know that you hold in honor that day on which you received public acknowledgement from Mother Church, who in the long course of her history has ever been eager to satisfy the needs of the times, inspiring and encouraging the faithful to unite in special associations to satisfy those needs. Thus ACLI were born with the approval and blessing of Christ's vicar.

From the beginning we put your organization under the powerful patronage of St. Joseph. Indeed, there could be no better protector to help you deepen in your lives the spirit of the gospel. As we said then, that spirit flows to you and all men from the heart of the God-Man, Savior of the world; but certainly no worker was ever more completely and profoundly penetrated by it than the foster father of Jesus, who lived with Him in closest intimacy and community of family life and work. Thus, if you wish to be close to Christ, we again today repeat: "Ite ad Joseph," Go to Joseph (Gen. 41, 55.)

ACLI must therefore bring to their members and their families and to the whole world of labor, an awareness of Christ's presence. Do not forget that your first care is to preserve and foster Christian living among workers. To this end it is not enough to fulfill and urge others to fulfill, your religious duties; you must deepen your knowledge of the teachings of the Faith, and understand even more fully what is imposed by the moral order of the world, an order established

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by God, taught and interpreted by the Church, in all that concerns the rights and duties of today's worker.

After giving special praise and encouragement to ACLI formation and training courses, Pius XII continued:

There you have the basis of hope which we have been expressing to ACLI over the past ten years, and which we repeat today in your presence with redoubled confidence. In the workers' movement, those only can feel real delusion who fix their gaze solely on the immediate political scene, on the maneuvers of the majority. Your present activity is the preparatory, and thus essential stage of politics. For you it is a question of training and preparing the way for the true Christian workman by means of 'social formation' towards trade-union and political life, and of sustaining and making easier his entire conduct by means of 'social action' and 'social service.' Continue, then, without weakness, the work already accomplished; in that way, you will be opening to Christ a direct entry into the world of the worker, and then also, indirectly, into other social groups. This is the fundamental 'open door' without which every other 'open door,' however interpreted, would be a surrender of so-called Christian forces.

Dear sons and daughters present in this sacred square, and you, working men and women of the whole world, let us extend to you the tenderness of a father's affection, such as that with which Jesus drew to Himself the multitudes hungering after Truth and Justice; be assured that in every necessity you will have at your side a guide, a defender, a Father. 119

In this most encouraging speech, Pius XII showed an amazing knowledge of the philosophy of ACLI. Truly he carried on the vital interest of his predecessors Leo XIII and Pius XI in workingmen's associations as helps in the reconstruction of the social order.

Commemorating ACLI's tenth anniversary, A. Brucelleri wrote in _Civilta Cattolica_:

ACLI have already crossed the first period of their history and have merited well in their apostolate among the working classes. Faithful to the directives of the Holy Father, they are able—always increasing

119 Pope Pius XII, "Feast of St. Joseph the Workman," _Catholic Mind_, LIII (September 1955), 564-568.
their ranks—to carry on contributions, now more visible, in the struggle, that under diverse groupings and standards sustain the Catholic forces against satanic sovietism. ACLI are not only an active negative help, an anti-Communist group, but above all, a positive influence directed to translating into concrete social reality the fundamental ideas mentioned by Pope Pius XII in his address of May 1, 1955.120

We have seen several favorable Ecclesiastical opinions concerning ACLI. But are there any groups that oppose the associations?

ACLI Critics

In 1948, the Communist dominated CGIL condemned ACLI for bringing about the split in the Italian labor movement and called on its members to resist the efforts of ACLI.121 This was one of a long line of Communist condemnations, each of which is really a compliment for it proves that ACLI are the enemies of Communism.

Conservative capitalists, too, have criticized ACLI. For some of these the "status quo" was the perfect order of society so that any pretense of doing a bit of retouching to the advantage of the depressed classes was looked upon as unpardonable demagogery. Among the ACLI critics, some of whom were representatives of industrial giants, were those who accused the movement of formulating propositions and programs proper to a political faction. Some even accused ACLI of leftist leanings, to which President Penazzuto answered:

ACLI have said this often, they are not a political party and have no intention of becoming one. This does not mean that ACLI do not have a duty and a responsibility in political life and in particular, do


not have a right of intervening with pronouncements and directives in clear defense of the world of the worker. All ACLI are interested in problems that directly or indirectly are concerned with inspirations of work, the conditions of valid social and economic progress. In these activities ACLI vindicate with great courage the fidelity of their Christian inspirations and confirm their vital adhesion to the social principles of the Church.122

ACLI have enemies in both the liberal and the conservative camps. No movement that is as active as ACLI in the reconstruction of the social order can escape criticism.

ACLI Growth

We have seen ACLI's self-appraisal, we have seen praise and blame from those outside the movement. Are there any other objective criteria by which we can measure ACLI's success or failure. One objective standard of ACLI's success is their steady growth. In 1957 there were 1,015,700 members, an increase of 115,300 over 1955.123 Growth is usually a good indication of the health and vitality of an organization. ACLI regional membership ranged from 213,464 in Lombardia in the north to 6,246 in Lucania in the south. Out of eighteen regions fifteen showed an increase in 1956 and fourteen had an increment in 1957. Several of the regions and their provinces showed a drop in membership and we saw some of the reasons for this in our discussion of ACLI organizing.

The number of Circles collaborating with the Central Office and receiving organizational, formative, and propagandistic help from it has been steadily increasing, for example, in 1955 there were 6,162 Circles which jumped to 7,063

122 Brucculeri, p. 360.
123 Reina, Aggiornamenti Sociali, 9 (January 1958), 53.
in 1957.124

We have already seen the wide scope of the ACLI functions in the previous chapter. A concrete summary of the organizational growth of ACLI can be seen in the following data concerning the provincial organs and their activities:

All the provinces have Patronato ACLI regularly functioning.
Seventy-five have an office of ENAIP.
Fifty-three have a regular office of Formation.
Fifty have a Provincial Office for Social Recreation.
Sixty-five have an Office for Nuclei.
Seventy-five have a Provincial Office of ACLI-Terra.
Sixty-five have Commissions of Young Aclists.
Seventy-three have a Feminine Commission.125

The majority of the Provinces enter into the full sweep of ACLI activities in their apostolate among the workers. Some Provinces either because of insufficiency of means or lack of good men have reached a comparatively low state of activity. Nevertheless, the movement as a whole seems very much alive. The growth of the social action and social services as delineated in Chapter V gives clear evidence of the fundamental animation of ACLI. In a word, the growth signifies the vitality of the movement and its acceptance by the Italian people as "The guide of the workers."

The Continued Fight Against Communism

One purpose in founding ACLI, and we might say a negative purpose, was to combat Communism which had taken hold of Italy after the fall of Fascism in World War II. Have ACLI succeeded in this purpose? We have already seen that ACLI were instrumental in forming the schism whereby the Catholic workers formed the free syndicate LCGIL and broke away from the Communist dominated CGIL.

124 Reina, p. 54.
125 Ibid., 54-56.
Actually ACLI had condemned CGIL for its Communist leanings as early as 1945, although it was not until 1948 that the move was made to form the LCGIL.¹²⁶

ACLI persist today in their fight against Communism. ACLI-backed CISL, LCGIL's successor, is still battling the CGIL in the area of the Internal Commissions elections in the factories. Beginning in 1953 the swing away from CGIL was notable. For example, at Sesto San Giovanni, a suburb of Milan, known as Italy's Stalingrad because of the Communist domination of many of the factories, in the Morelli electro-magnetic plants CISL received the majority of the votes of the workers. In factories in Turin, Milan, Genoa, all Communist strongholds, CISL has gained victories.¹²⁷

In the Milan Concordia plant only 620 of 1,880 Communist workers voted for the Communist syndicate CGIL. One Communist worker explained his reasons for voting for the ACLI-backed CISL.

We are tired of being pushed around by the activists and of having party bosses publishing manifestoes and threatening to strike for all sorts of complicated reasons and remote causes, e.g., against the Western Union in Europe, against the atom bomb, etc. Naturally, we're against both, but we are more interested in how to get better wages. And the Christian unions have left out politics and ideologies altogether and have gotten down to business with the employers and obtained substantial advantages on several occasions. We need the increases and prefer to play bowls on Sunday rather than demonstrate for peace, which does not at the present time seem to be threatened; we vote for the Christian unions because they are more realistic than our own.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ LaPalombara, pp. 17-22.

¹²⁷ "Communist Decline in Italy," Tablet, 205 (June 25, 1956), 616.

¹²⁸ Ibid.
The Italian worker suspects that the Communists are not generally interested in his welfare and consequently turns to CISL, which in carrying out its philosophy of Christian social action, has shown a genuine interest in the workers' material well being. This influences even Communist workers.

**Summary**

In this chapter we have studied ACLI with the best criteria at hand, namely, their own self-criticism, Ecclesiastical approval, Communist and other opinions, ACLI's own healthy growth and spread, the manifold functions of the movement, and, finally, their continued fight against Communism. Judging by these yardsticks, ACLI seem to be doing a good job. They are human groups and consequently are not unqualified successes in all areas of activity. But they are a step forward and have done much to further the reconstruction of the social order in Italy.

ACLI's over 7,000 Circles are to be found throughout the length and breadth of Italy, their 6,200 nuclei may be seen in factories and places of business all over the country, their over one million members are a force to be reckoned with in the orientation of Italian social life. Moreover, ACLI do not limit themselves to directing, soliciting, and protecting, but as we have seen, they also act and the complex of their works, ranging from social schools to recreational services, from agricultural co-ops and consumer co-ops to vocational training schools, from economic aids to Patronato-ACLI, from housing for workers to ACLI food stores, is a concrete proof of their action.

Summing up, then, in this thesis we have seen the problem of social justice in general with solutions proposed by Popes Leo XIII and Pius XI whose suggestions included Catholic associations of workers as means of reconstructing
the social order. We studied the background and beginnings of ACLI, The Catholic Associations of Italian Workers; their philosophy of the social renewal of the working world; their organization, including the vertical structure of the Circles, Provinces, and National Office. We investigated the ACLI functions of organizing, training, social action, and social service. And, finally, we evaluated their efforts by measuring against many objective criteria.

In conclusion, let ACLI themselves sum up their movement as they did in their Fifth National Convention, November 4-6, 1955, when they outlined their two-fold end, on the one hand, "a substitute force for the Communist myth," and on the other hand, "a broad Catholic worker movement, a guide of the working classes." According to their own words, ACLI are not merely a contingent, negative force, born to make competition for Communism; but they constitute a grand movement of the workers, rich in its own ideology and possessing its own social program, an uplifting movement capable of being placed--for force of its ideas, for the concrete realization of its program, for the dynamism of its leadership—as a positive guide of the Italian workers.

ACLI, then, are a movement of and for the workers. In fact, ACLI are the Catholic workers of the movement which inserts itself into the general force of emancipation and promotion that characterizes the Italy of today. This general uplifting embraces all the life of the workers—economic, social, educational, syndical, political, and religious.129

In a word, ACLI seem to be successfully fulfilling their definition found in Article 1 of the Statutes:

129 ACLI, Idee, p. 6.
The Catholic Associations of Italian Workers are the social movement of Catholic workers. They unite themselves in order that, in the application of Christian doctrine according to the teachings of the Church, they may recognize the foundations and the conditions of a renewed social order, in which may be insured, according to justice, the recognition of the rights and the satisfaction of the material and spiritual needs of the workers.130

130 ACLI, Statute, p. 1.
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