

**Tom Behan 1957–2010**  
**By Philip Cooke, John Foot (editors, *Modern Italy*)**  
**Stephen Gundle (Chair, ASMI)**

We were deeply saddened to hear of the death of our friend Tom Behan on 30 August 2010. He had been ill for some time, but his health declined very rapidly during the summer and the news that he had passed away in Milan at the age of 53 came as a shock to all who knew him. Tom, born in North London and of Irish extraction, took to the study of Italian history and politics after a short spell living in Naples, a city which he loved with a passion and whose language and driving style had a long-lasting influence on him. He took a first degree at Reading and followed this up with a PhD on the relationship between the Communist Party and the working class in post-war Milan. Christopher Duggan, with whom he worked, found him to be a committed and thorough research student who enjoyed lively and trenchant discussions about his research topic, which was later published as *The Long Awaited Moment*. After Reading, Tom worked at La Trobe University in Melbourne, Glasgow University and, lastly, the University of Kent. Tom published extensively: on the *camorra*, anti-mafia activist Peppino Impastato, Dario Fo, the Resistance (this book is reviewed in this issue of *Modern Italy*), and the rise of Fascism. His work has had a wide impact and is well-known in Italy where several of his books have been published in translation. He preferred the book form, above all, and he developed an engaging and lively style, which did not always meet with universal approval. But Tom did not seek plaudits. He wanted his books to be read, above all, by non-academics and he held a very strong conviction, grounded in his radical left-wing political beliefs, that it was necessary to educate his readers about all that was bad, and all that was good, about Italy. Tom liked to suggest that he was a ‘non-academic’ himself, or at least a different kind of academic, yet his books were always thoroughly researched and the product of profound reflection. Tom was also an inspiring teacher who, in a course he taught at Kent on the Resistance, encouraged his students to join him in a rousing rendition of *Bella ciao*. Tom collaborated closely with *Modern Italy* since its inception and was a regular book-reviewer (his last review for us is published in this issue). He also acted as a referee for a whole series of articles – his reports were always very helpful, and showed his deep knowledge of the subject. He often analysed contemporary political events for the Socialist Worker Party, such as the demonstrations and violence in Genoa in 2001, and he was instrumental in introducing figures such as Giovanni Pesce, legendary partisan leader in Milan, to audiences in London and elsewhere. Tom also took the time to read and discuss the work of his colleagues, and everyone who he helped out in this way will readily acknowledge how valuable his comments were. We would like to extend our sympathy to his family and to his partner, Barbara Rampoldi.

**Tom Behan's books:**

*The Camorra: Political Criminality in Italy* (Routledge, London, 1996).

*The Long Awaited Moment: The Working Class and the Italian Communist Party in Milan, 1943–1948*  
(Peter Lang, New York, 1997).

*See Naples and Die: The Camorra and Organized Crime* (I. B. Tauris 2002, Tauris Parke, 2009).

*Dario Fo: Revolutionary Theatre* (Pluto, London, 1998).

*The Resistible Rise of Benito Mussolini* (Boomarks, London, 2003).

*Defiance: The Untold Story of One Man Who Stood Up to the Sicilian Mafia* (I. B. Tauris, 2008).

*The Italian Resistance: Fascists, Guerrillas and the Allies* (Pluto, London, 2009).

A conference dedicated to Tom's memory on 'Contemporary Representations of Organised Crime in Italy and Beyond' will be held at the University of Kent in June 2011. For details contact Wissia Fiorucci: [w.fiorucci@kent.ac.uk](mailto:w.fiorucci@kent.ac.uk)