

Craxi's gambit: 'Communion and Liberation' movement

by Webster Tarpley

The scene is Rimini, a beach resort on the northern Adriatic Sea, and a town with a robust gnostic tradition. Rimini has in recent years been the site of a late-summer national meeting of Communion and Liberation, generally organized around a pseudocultural theme. In 1985, the theme was Parsifal and the quest for the holy grail. In 1986, it was "More Society, Less State." This time the theme is "Seekers of the Infinite, Builders of History," supposedly as an introduction to the question of religious feelings.

Christian Democratic deputy Paolo Cabras called the atmosphere "psychedelic." Among the guests, the timed-honored presences of Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti of the Christian Democracy (DC) and Cardinal Achille Silvestrini of the Secretariat of State of the Vatican. Some foreign dignitaries, like French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas. But the big news of this year's CL Meeting was the invasion of the top bosses of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI): Gianni De Michelis, Venetian playboy and vice president of the Italian Council of Ministers, with his retinue of party girls; Claudio Martelli, ex-premier Bettino Craxi's boyish hatchetman and enforcer. Martelli's raving speech identifies the principal issue of the meeting: "Jesuits and bigots, ex-Stalinists and unrepentant freemasons, mingle their shouts in a noisy superstition with indignant shouts of 'get thee behind me,' because Craxi-Beelzebub speaks with Torquemada-Don Giussani." Apart from Martelli's raving, ideologized rhetoric, the message comes down to: The PSI has come to Rimini to make a deal with CL to get Bettino Craxi's strongman ambitions back on track.

How could a self-styled traditional Catholic group like CL support the PSI, the party of abortion, divorce, euthanasia, radical-chic modernism, and above all of the grab for raw power at any price? A good question. Here are some of the attempted answers offered by the new leader of CL, Giancarlo Cesana, himself a former *Lotta Continua* Maoist: "It is true. We have a certain feeling for the PSI. Craxi is an intelligent man who has opened up to the needs of society. We like the fact that he has taken the hammer and sickle off the seal of the PSI. That he wants to return to humanitarian socialism, to socialism as it was originally. And that he has

abandoned ideological schemas. We liked what he did for the Concordat."

Pressed little, Cesana admits that he finds Craxi more "simpatico" than De Mita. Why? "From the human point of view and for a certain idealism that he has. I don't think that his position is only realpolitik, his is not atheistic Marxism, but humanitarian socialism, more open to popular Christian feelings, more open to the rights of everyone to liberty, not tied so tightly to the state in a way that hurts the individual."

Craxi's Damascus Road conversion from atheistic freemasonry came, at least in Cesana's view, in an interview to CL's weekly paper, *Il Sabato*. Here the would-be Duce pontificated as follows: "Secular politics has the vital need of winning back moral values, on pain of dying of consumerism, personalism, and the most egoistic hedonism. In this regard there is a function for religions and for the religious spirit which we do not repudiate in any way." After these remarks by Craxi, argues Cesana, it is simply impossible to pretend that something momentous has not happened.

But even the Milan daily *Avvenire*, owned by the Italian Catholic bishops, and massively influenced by CL itself, could not help but ask, what about the PSI stand favoring abortion and divorce? The Cesana group responded with an official communiqué: "The cultural convergences between the Popular Movement and the PSI of Craxi boil down to the slogan, 'more society and less state.'"

De Michelis was never briefed. When this Venetian voluptuary began his speech to the CL audience, he blurted out, "I am a Protestant. I am for more state." Meaning, as he quickly explained, new rules to govern society.

Undaunted, CL's communiqué went on, "It is slanderous to imply in these convergences any capitulation on divorce, abortion, euthanasia, with their anthropological roots," before concluding self-righteously: "Today, as in the past, CL's members are risking unpopularity and even more serious things to affirm the necessity of those values of creative freedom which give a people their countenance."

Cesana had been meeting with Gennaro Acquaviva, Craxi's personal envoy, at the Rome restaurant Il Coriolano since this past spring. In late June, Cesana was brought to the

PSI headquarters for a private audience with the new “Il Duce.” Not surprisingly, Cesana at Rimini attacked Craxi’s main rival: “In reality the DC of De Mita is an unmoving power structure. The Catholic world is reduced to a tank full of votes. The DC is an electoral misunderstanding.” Cesana’s communiqué spells it out further: CL is opposing “a predetermined political project, which involves, among others, components of the DC who, in their declared cultural accordance with the LaMalfians [Republican Party], see the salvation of the country in the alliance with the PCI [Italian Communist Party].”

So what is the practical result? Vote PSI, suggest the CL ideologues. One of them, Alessandro Banfi, editor of *Il Sabato*, observes: “If we are living in a world that is post-modern and post-ideological, then the single party for all Catholics does not make sense.” Cesana hints in the same direction: “Change parties at the moment of the elections? For now it’s not part of our strategy, but it’s not unthinkable.” Another CL ideologue elaborates: “We are like Pius IV, who said he preferred the earthquake (Garibaldi) to the cholera (Cavour).” The subservience to the self-styled Garibaldian Craxi, and the willful rejection of the most positive political leader in recent Italian history (Cavour), could not be clearer.

Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti had appeared at Rimini to tell Communion and Liberation that they could not get engaged to the Socialist Party, since they were already married to the Christian Democracy. But he was fooling nobody, nor did he intend to. Fulsome was the praise of Cardinal Silvestrini: “This is a historic day. What seems like a conflict in reality is a method for encounter, for true unity. Even if the political unity of the Catholics is not a dogma. What counts is coherence with faith, and here at the Meeting I can visibly feel it.” This endorsement of splitting the DC caused something of a stir, including in the Vatican. Many were puzzled by a statement issued by Cardinal Silvio Oddi, who noted that while CL is “chomping at the bit,” it is galloping, and “galloping in the right direction.”

The Italian newspapers found a word for CL’s maneuvers: *politicume*, dirty politics. The CEI, the Italian Bishops’ Conference, issued a reprimand against CL for their activities. De Mita dismissed them as “hack theologians and beach theologians.” But Giussani, Formigoni, and Buttiglione are determined to press on. Their topic for Rimini 1989, if their organization lasts that long? “Socrates, Sherlock Holmes, and Don Juan.”

And Don Giussani has new tricks up his sleeve to gain favor in the Secretariat of State. He is one of the promoters of “Lumen 2000,” a network of three television satellites which will allegedly make it possible for the Vatican to televise papal messages and other programming to suitably equipped television sets all over the planet. The head office of Lumen 2000 will be in Dallas, Texas. The money comes from certain Dutch charismatic circles.

CL: pornography, Mao, and dirty money

by Webster Tarpley

Communion and Liberation (*Comunione e liberazione*) always presents itself as a rigorous guardian of traditional Catholic virtues. CL leaders like Formigoni and Buttiglione boast that they have taken vows of chastity, and hint that they have kept their virginity intact. These claims of purity and abstinence stand in stark contrast to the cultural atmosphere of the Rimini meeting.

Pornography

One of the stars of that meeting was a certain Franco Branciaroli, noted as one of the leading Italian pornographic actors of the current phase. Branciaroli has made two films with the notorious Tinto Brass, one of the world’s leading red lights among erotic and pornographic cineasts. For Tinto Brass, Branciaroli has been the protagonist of “La Chiave” and “Miranda.” The stars of these two productions were Stefania Sandrelli and Serena Grandi, respectively. Serena Grandi has predicated her career upon the exhibition of her mammary apparatus, which seems to owe something to art as well as to nature.

Stefania Sandrelli has admitted her participation in sex orgies in the Roman nightclub Number One, which was at the center of a scandal some years back because of cocaine consumption on the premises, especially by senior officials of the Bank of Italy, the nation’s central bank. Both films graphically depict a series of squalid sexual encounters. In spite of all this, Branciaroli was presented by CL at Rimini as a member in good standing. When asked by journalists if he had any second thoughts about his erotic roles with Grandi and Sandrelli, Branciaroli answered: “The only mistake I made was not to have actually performed intercourse with both of them. But I am a Catholic, and I could not do it.”

Asked what he thought about pornography, he answered: “Look, this was pornography that was more like a good meal. Anyway, I am convinced that the Church is not based only on the sixth and ninth Commandments. . . . But I have to be myself, and I am thinking of complete love, including the