

Vatican wonders: Is the Masonry meddling?

by Leonardo Servadio

Ever since the Berlin Wall fell, the old conflict between the Freemasonry and the Catholic Church has reemerged in force. The Italian magazine *Famiglia Cristiana*, in its Oct. 2 edition, in writing about the Balkan crisis posed the problem: Who doesn't want peace? The answer was: the Masonry. According to the Catholic weekly, a "crisis unit" was set up in the Vatican to follow events in Yugoslavia and thereabouts, and much attention has been paid to the fact that "five of the seven socialist foreign ministers in the European Community are Masons" and that the "highly active liberal-masonic lobbies in eastern Europe" do not like the idea of predominantly Catholic regions like Slovenia and Croatia becoming sovereign states.

According to *Famiglia Cristiana*, it is thought in the Vatican that there is a masonic strategy which "intends to keep the Catholics minorities by maintaining the current European setup, even at the cost of bloody clashes." Such a strategy would consist of 1) attracting ex-communists into the Socialist International, while financing a myriad of lay movements to hinder the parties of Christian inspiration; 2) buying most of the press organs: for example, in Yugoslavia all the press close to the Serbian leader Milosevic are already in masonic hands; 3) claiming credit for the fall of the Berlin Wall, which is presented as a new "French Revolution." *Famiglia Cristiana* mentions last year's visit to Prague by the French Masonry's envoy, Jean-Robert Reagache, one week before Pope John Paul II went there: Reagache said he was worried about the capillary action which the Catholic Church was carrying out, and showed his interest in countering that influence.

Among the masonic-tied European Community (EC) foreign ministers is Italy's Gianni De Michelis. According to the Slovene newspaper *Delon* of June 26, 1990, De Michelis "informed his Yugoslavian interlocutors of the possibility of greater foreign capital investments if there is an early restoration of the Masonry." Also, De Michelis, in an interview with the weekly *Sabato* which came out on Sept. 26, said of the Holy See's policy toward Slovenia and Croatia: "I understand that there is interest in safeguarding a large Catholic community. But what point is there in reopening a war of religion? There are 9 million Serbs who will remain. What is the point of provoking feelings of hostility in the

Orthodox Serbs toward the Croatian Catholics?"

This statement, despite later denials and clarifications from the foreign minister, was understood universally as an attack on the Pope's stance in defense of the Croatian populations attacked by Serbian troops. Of course, it is De Michelis who has cynically refused to challenge the Serbian communist dictator Slobodan Milosevic during the EC's "negotiations" on the crisis, saying the Balkans are "not worth fighting for."

The Church-Masonry conflict must not be seen as a mere competition for influence over ex-communist lands, nor can it be interpreted by the logic of petty politics, although it is reflected at that level: Witness such efforts as Bettino Craxi's Italian Socialist Party courting its old rivals, the Social Democrats, as allies to squeeze Christian influence out of Italian politics.

The question of values

The nub of the problem was stated by Cardinal Roger Etchegaray in his keynote to the colloquium "A Hundred Years of Social Movements: 1891-1991" at the Moscow Academy of Labor. Etchegaray stressed that there can be no justice without freedom, without solidarity, and without mercy, and that the role of the Catholic Church in promoting these values is "unrenounceable." "It is easier to be slaves than masters," he said, in an obvious criticism of the radical "free market" policies now being promoted in the East both in the economic and social-moral fields, "and thus, new ideologies and new idols are worshiped in the place of those just burned." Getting even more explicit, the cardinal said, "The spectacle which the free countries offer to those becoming free makes Dostoevsky's word come true, that man considers freedom a burden to be shed. . . . At bottom," he continued, "we have the freedom which we are able to assume. Freedom is not given from the outside, by a series of liberalizations."

On labor, he added, "Where is labor going today, with its funeral cortège of more and more jobless?" This is "the great enigma at the dawn of the twenty-first century, which will find an answer when labor wins freedom from commercial enterprise and manifests its true significance." Human labor cannot be a function of the state, but neither can it be the function of a certain business's success in the market. It must rather be restored to its own function of promoting human life: Clearly, without labor and without technology it is unthinkable that billions of people could live on earth.

The meaning of labor is not that of the utopian robot-man idealized by both masonic and communist ideology, who is not the slave of technology as the ecologists and existentialists rave, but the slave of himself—of his incapacity to identify his transcendent dignity, and to understand that freedom does not mean the crushing of the individual by society but the freeing of the individual through socially meaningful work, which is made humanly acceptable thanks to technological progress.