

avoided answering a question on George Soros: Not accidentally, Soros's main Italian partner is Isidoro Albertini, Italy's number one stockbroker and intimate friend of Carlo De Benedetti.

As we are writing this, a Northern League delegation is in London, invited by Schroeders bank for a "road show" before City bankers. They are undergoing testing to see how good their program will be for international speculators. Last week, the City hosted Achille Occhetto, PDS secretary general, while another PDS leader, Giorgio Napolitano, was meeting with George Soros in New York. The next invited guest of the City is Silvio Berlusconi. After Berlusconi, a delegation of the PPI is expected.

Making fun of such a procession, journalist Filippo Caccarelli wrote in the daily *La Stampa*: "For sure, the tour abroad of Italian politicians, at important moments, confirms with old and not really very noble traditions. Nevertheless, the geographical change of destination is symptomatically newsworthy. For years, according to seemingly immutable schemes, the Italian premier 'had' to make a pilgrimage to the White House, while the DC secretary general 'had' to be received at the Vatican. In a totally mirror fashion, and therefore with the same ritual character, the PCI [Italian Communist Party] secretary general 'had' to go to the Kremlin, to the CPSU secretary general. . . . London was evidently cut out of this historical triangle. . . . In these political trips [England] is the nation of surviving Friedmanite purism . . . dispensing super-free-market notes and visas."

Italian political leaders are propitiating the game-masters of international destabilization. They are blind to the fact that their power is based on a collapsing paper castle, and that Italy's lack of an independent role in the Mediterranean and in the Balkans will contribute to the British geopolitical schemes which are leading to a replay of World War I.

Interview: Marina Salamon

Marina Salamon runs Replay, one of the companies of the Benetton group, which has a large market in Germany as well as Italy, and is the spokesman for the Club of Entrepreneurs, an association of New Age businessmen. Among the club's members are famous names like Luciano Benetton, Paolo Marzotto, Franco De Benedetti (whose brother Carlo did not join because he has legal problems), Aversa (bitters), Lino Romano (the head of the Neapolitan businessmen), and Claudio Buzziol (co-owner of Replay with Salamon). Marina Salamon told us she belongs to a very old Venetian oligarchical family, which had a Doge, Salamon di Centranigo, back in 1052, and is not related to the American Salomon family of financiers. The Venetian Salamons never moved out of the island city, nor have they intermarried with other European

houses, in order not to lose their oligarchical privileges. When the Venetian Republic fell at the end of the 18th century they took refuge in Istria, an island in the Tyrrhenian Sea near Capri, and they came back to Italy when the Republic was proclaimed after World War II. Today Marina is in the municipal administration, led by philosopher Massimo Cacciari, which she defines as "beautiful and harmonious," and which has just gotten over the shoals of a referendum which threatened to split the city three ways. Marina's father is the manager of Doxa, Italy's main opinion poll outfit.

The Club of Entrepreneurs has lined up with the left, and Marina, reached on her cellular phone at Rome's Fiumicino airport, explains why, in an interview granted to Claudio Celani on Feb. 8.

EIR: How can it be that businessmen are lining up with the left?

Salamon: For two basic reasons: Because we need an austerity policy which takes people's needs and solidarity into account, insofar as we say no to the pure free market; secondly, because [Northern League chief Umberto] Bossi and the new right do not represent the market.

EIR: Strange that the left could give more assurances to the market than the right.

Salamon: No, because in Italy the market has to be created. We have had a protected market up to now, and Berlusconi, who represents the right, has many anti-market forces behind him, such as the PSI [Italian Socialist Party] and the other governing parties.

EIR: And on privatizations?

Salamon: The left offers all the guarantees.

EIR: Even selling the state holdings to George Soros?

Salamon: We have to distinguish between what is not strategic, like snack bars, which should be sold of course without any constraints to foreign capital, even if that means facing consequences in terms of immediate job loss (which later would be reabsorbed), and between strategic productive industries like the Nuovo Pignone with high added value, where we need guarantees that the plants should stay in Italy.

EIR: How do you see the process of globalization of the financial markets and world economic integration, including the moving of production from North to South?

Salamon: I see it as inevitable. We have to think in terms of manufactures like textiles, which will entirely be moved out of Italy, and to keep inside Italy the places of production of ideas.

EIR: What do we do with the unemployed?

Salamon: We need to take an intelligent new look at the social shock absorbers. A different environmental policy is

required: The environment, together with tourism, is a sector which offers enormous possibilities for absorbing the labor force.

EIR: Some economists, such as Romano Prodi, suggest that we should respond to the "American challenge" of the NAFTA treaty by enacting a similar free trade agreement between eastern and western Europe. What do you think?

Salamon: I think it is idiotic to close the European markets, and we need a greater integration of them. For example, EFTA, which includes the Scandinavian countries and Switzerland, ought to be immediately integrated into the European Union.

EIR: One criticized effect of the liberalization of the financial markets is the excessive development of so-called derivatives. What can be done to regulate them? Some people propose taxing them.

Salamon: I am against any provision taken by individual nations. Today the use of these tools is part of corporate practice, hence the problem has to be taken on globally, at the international level.

Interview: Aldo Mariconda

Aldo Mariconda, the former Northern League candidate for mayor of Venice, is the nephew of Bruno Visentini, the "grand old man" of the bankers' Italian Republican Party, who recently lined up with the "progressive" cartel for the upcoming national elections in Italy. Like Uncle Bruno, Mariconda comes out of the Olivetti Corp., for which he worked abroad for ten years. We asked Mariconda how it occurs that he is on the "right" of the political spectrum whereas his uncle is on the "left." "But in reality I have a lot more affinities with him than with the present politics of the League," he responded in his singsong Venetian accent, telling us that he has been a member of the Republican Party (PRI) since 1992, and that he ran on the Northern League slate "with the hope of causing the movement to grow in the direction of the lay-liberal alternative we were all hoping for. I am afraid this is not going to succeed."

Mariconda is especially rankled that the League missed the chance offered by the Agnelli Foundation, which in mid-December organized a convention on federalism, "a theme which has always been dear to the PRI; I recall [the late PRI leader] Ugo La Malfa's battle to abolish the prefectures," referring to the local authorities answerable to the central Italian government. The Agnelli Foundation proposal was for dividing Italy into 12 regions in a confederacy, but Northern League head Umberto Bossi snubbed the meeting. As is well known, the League was at that time reaching its decision to

ally with media magnate Silvio Berlusconi, perhaps pushed by certain forces which some Northern Leaguers see as dominated behind the scenes by Socialist Party leader and long-time former premier, Bettino Craxi.

Disappointed by Bossi, Mariconda stands in the wings. He says the League should "shed its protest image," a retooling which would not require a change in leadership, but could be carried out by a "staff which would flank Bossi."

Having asserted that the League has gone down the wrong track, Mariconda launched into a paean for Achille Occhetto, the head of the renamed Communist Party or Democratic Left Party (PDS). "I must say on the other hand that the program presented by Occhetto is a shift. It is a truly liberal program, which gives flexibility to labor, which allows us to get past the excessive union ties. In effect, the recovery can only come from the left." As for Left Refoundation, the splitoff of hardline communists from the PDS, "they are from 'Jurassic Park.' They want to save jobs with the property tax. But it looks as though, fortunately, Occhetto seems to have given up on that." (Only days after we talked, however, Mariconda's Uncle Bruno relaunched the property tax.)

I asked Mariconda if there is no difference of opinion inside the De Benedetti-Visentini-Benetton group, which my interlocutor at first refused to call "Venetian" ("De Benedetti is not from Venice") but then accepted the label in the cultural sense. "Well, yes, we are a quite homogeneous group, within which there are tactical differences. We are forces which cut across the lines. For the moment I am a spectator. What is happening in Italy is not pretty, this McCarthyism, this Manicheanism."

Doesn't it bother you to have George Soros, who recently lined up with the "progressives," as a fellow traveler? Mariconda asked to have the name repeated twice and then said, "I am worried that the left is trying to get control over the mass media."

I asked his opinion of the "progressive" Venetian city government headed by his ex-rival Massimo Cacciari. "It's not working badly. There are problems in the functioning of the municipal machine, because 4,800 employees are too many. We need to rationalize." And what does he think of Cacciari's spokesman, Marina Salamon, who also speaks for the Club of Entrepreneurs? "I know her. We had an unhappy encounter on TV. She is very aggressive, but then we cleared things up and she apologized. I think she is all right after all."

What does he think of the proposal made by one member of the Cacciari administration to reintroduce the infamous old Venetian system of "secret accusations" to catch Venice's tax evaders? Mariconda prefers severe controls. He cited the model of Chioggia, a nearby city where the municipality got the Tax Police to authorize them to check low-income housing and see who is living there illegally, usually because they are no longer needy and don't qualify for the subsidized quarters they continue to inhabit.