

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.

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## Interview: Aldo Mariconda

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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 Manicheism."

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.