

## Report from Rome by Rosanna Impiccini

### Did Radicals take drug dollars?

*So says a mobster turned state's evidence, who also accuses the Socialist Party of former Premier Craxi.*

Times have been tough for the Italian Radical Party and its guru, Marco Pannella. In November, the Italian Parliament finally got rid of the bothersome congressman. Then the anti-drug law passed the Italian Senate, signaling a heavy defeat for the "Anti-Prohibitionist" League. Pannella and the Radicals had launched the League on an international scale at a London press conference, where they proposed free sale of marijuana and hashish, and the distribution of cocaine and heroin at drugstores.

In early December, Pannella and his sidekick Marco Taradesh, an American expatriot living in Rome, were exposed by the Schiller Institute at a press conference they gave in Bogota, Colombia, where they had traveled to meet with pro-legalization presidential candidate Ernesto Samper Pizano at the height of Colombia's war on the narco-terrorist armies.

Back in Italy, the newspapers printed statements by a "repentant" member of the Corleone mafia "family," Francesco Marino Mannoia, which detailed ties—according to "press leaks"—between the Radical Party and the mafia. No surprise to us, since we have frequently emphasized that whoever is working to get drugs legalized is playing the game of the mafia, which has every interest in expanding its consumer market.

Mannoia was said to have stated that in the 1987 political elections "Cosa Nostra," the crime family, had backed the Socialists and raised money for the Radical Party. "In the political elections . . . a precise order came out from inside the prison," Mannoia

allegedly told Judge Falcone, reported the daily *La Repubblica*, "which entrusted his loyalists with voting or causing their family and friends to vote for the Italian Socialist Party. . . . When the Radical Party risked dissolving, we set quotas in jail at the initiative of [mafioso] Pippo Calò: He gave the Radicals 100 million [liras], the Santa Maria del Gesù family 50 million, of which 30 were contributed directly by Giovanni Bontade. . . . The initiative to finance the Radicals was exclusively internal to the Ucciardone prison, though funds were also collected on the outside."

We don't think the mafia dedicates itself to charitable works, so if it is true that they paid, presumably it was for favors received. Similar indiscretions came out over a year ago regarding the presumed funneling of mafia votes into the Radical Party in the area around Trapani, Sicily. While one can hardly give 100% credibility to the "revelations of repentant criminals," there are too many reports circulating about such links not to take them into consideration. Moreover, the Radicals' attitude lends credibility to the charges, since they have spewed out much demagoguery but no facts. Threats have been delivered through the mass media, to which the Radicals have ample access, but unless we are misinformed, no suits have been filed in denial of the accusations.

Marco Pannella's entire response was to deliver a public warning to Premier Giulio Andreotti, recalling that similar charges were made with regard to mafioso Salvo Lima and certain assassinations in Sicily, implying

that he and Andreotti are in the same boat. The other champion of the Anti-Prohibitionist League, Marco Taradesh, aside from saying that Mannoia had lied, spluttered about "a justice that bases its verdicts on dirty words of blood." This was a lot of words thrown about to outflank a question to which one could have given a straight answer, namely: "Did you take the money or not?" The treasurer of the Radical Party threatened to file suit for defamation against all the newspapers which had violated judicial secrecy.

What about the Socialist Party, which has posed for the last year as the champion of the anti-drug cause? The former premier of Italy and current secretary of the Socialist Party, Bettino Craxi, happened to be visiting the United States when the Mannoia leaks were printed in Italy. Craxi met President Bush's anti-drug czar, William Bennett, who styled him "an international hero for his commitment and his determination against drugs."

The Socialist leader went further. He denounced Syria's involvement in drug trafficking and the complicity of the government in Rome, which treats Syria as a friendly country.

Right on the mark! Too bad Craxi forgot that the Socialist Party is a coalition partner in this government which is Syria's accomplice, and that its foreign minister is a Socialist, Gianni De Michelis.

No doubt, those fanning the flames of this scandal are not doing it for the love of truth. They include the newspaper *La Repubblica*, one of Europe's main promoters of a deal with Gorbachov; the Communist Party; and the left wing of the Christian Democrats—none of them allies of a serious effort to stop drugs. But if it serves to bring out the truth, let us hope that the inter-party warfare, carried out by means of sensational revelations, will continue to rage.