

backfire, turning Bossi into a folk hero. State repression against the League, insist those critics, although constitutionally demanded, would be seen as another example of a state seen as an oppressive power, whose only function is to raise taxes.

In reality, such arguments betray the decision not to fight against the secessionist threat. Even worse, a fifth column in both the government and opposition hope that they can strike a deal with Bossi and get some electoral gains — as has been attempted in the case of the upcoming elections in major cities at the end of November. Negotiations took place between League leaders and the two largest opposition parties, Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* ("Go! Italy") and the National Alliance (*Alleanza Nazionale*). Bossi had proposed to form a coalition to win mayoral elections in Venice, where the League votes are indispensable if the conservative bloc is to defeat the incumbent center-left coalition. On his side, Bossi would make a sensational political comeback after more than a year of total political isolation, with the bonus of having taken over the alleged future capital of his secessionist Padania state.

The deal failed because of strong opposition inside Berlusconi's party, but it revealed the existence of a pro-League faction in almost every party. These factions, further developing the appeasement line, insist that if one steals the League's program, it will steal its votes as well. It is not difficult to see, behind such thought, the same oligarchical power which has promoted the League in the first place.

Following this line of thinking, a section of the Venetian political and financial elite has promoted the idea of a "catalan model" for the three northeastern regions, Veneto, Trentino, and Friuli-Venezia Giulia. Calling itself the "Northeastern Party," this group pushes a "soft" secession line, demanding ample economic and political autonomy from Rome. Leading figures of this party are: Count Pietro Marzotto, a financier whose father at the end of the war insisted that Italy develop no large industry; New Age businessman Benetton; Giorgio Lago, former editor of the Venice paper *Il Gazzettino*, who promoted the League in the 1980s; Venice Mayor Massimo Cacciari, a follower of Friedrich Nietzsche (Cacciari has recently denied the trade unions the use of St. Mark's Square for an anti-League demonstration). The Northeastern Party is expected to run its candidate for mayor in Venice, too.

Destroy the tentacles of the British Empire

Facing "hard" and "soft" separatists, the government is bound in a Hamlet-like dilemma, to which there is no solution unless pro-national forces abandon completely the underlying parameter of the wrong policy so far followed, that is, free market economy. In Europe, this is called Maastricht, or the single currency project. The budget control policy enforced to fulfill the parameters and the schedule dictated by the Maastricht Treaty makes it virtually impossible to cut the ground out from under the feet of the League. Simple police measures

A 'Southern League' rears its head

Separatist groups in southern Italy will proclaim the "free state of the South," or "Ausonia," at an upcoming meeting organized by the "Independentist Movement-Southern League." According to its spokesmen, it will gather all separatist groups from southern Italy. With utter lack of historical insight, the separatist meeting will take place in the throne room of Friedrich II's castle in Melzi, Basilicata. There, in 1231, Friedrich, the last great humanist leader of the Hohenstaufen, issued the "Constitutiones," i.e., the basic law of his kingdom. Now, separatists are planning to use his premises to launch an entity, which defies the very idea of a nation. The name "Ausonia," as distinguished from Bossi's "Padania," comes from the populations of Greek extraction who inhabited the Magna Grecia colonies in southern Italy.

In a Wagnerian, pagan ceremony parallel to that performed by Bossi last year (when he collected a "holy bottle" of water coming from the source of the Po River), the Southern League will plant a tree using soil "from all the regions of southern Italy." The Southern League is known, by the police and intelligence authorities in Italy, for its connections to Serb war criminal Arkan, who has also travelled to southern Italy distributing large amounts of money to support the project.

alone, albeit necessary at this point, are not going to solve the problem. However, nobody today in Rome has the guts to make the necessary break with such wrong policies, because this would mean a break with "Europe."

Essential to resolving this tangled situation is the attitude of the U.S. administration. Italy-watchers in Washington must realize that the country is being assailed by a foreign power, as the three major newspapers mentioned at the beginning explicitly reported (see box). Stressing the "Unholy League" among Prince Philip, his Dutch accomplices, and former U.S. President George Bush, these media point to an enemy of the Italian nation which is also an enemy of the United States and the Clinton Presidency itself. In the spirit of the postwar alliance between Italy and the United States, and of the historical common heritage of the two nations (Italy is where the modern nation-state was invented; the United States where it was first realized), the Clinton administration must add yet one more reason to the motivations for using its executive power to destroy the British Empire and its worldwide tentacles.