

# The Flagellants of Val di Susa And the Danger of Bonapartism

by Claudio Celani

A popular upsurge has stopped the construction of a vital transport infrastructure link, the Turin-Lyon high-speed railway line, which is planned to connect Lisbon, Portugal to Kiev, Ukraine, running south of the Alps, as part of the “Corridor 5” trans-European project. Although the suspension of the construction site is said to be only temporary, in expectation of clarifying alleged environmental issues, the development has to be seen in the context of growing European-wide “Flagellant-type” mass movements, promoted and used by pro-feudal oligarchical forces in a strategy to overthrow the institutions of the nation-state. As Lyndon LaRouche had forecast years ago, globalization is unleashing Jacobin mobs, which are used to justify the introduction of police-state, anti-constitutional regimes, as recently seen in France as a response to the upsurges in the “banlieues,” the slums surrounding Paris.

The mass upsurge in Val di Susa (Susa Valley) was planned on March 15, 2003, when the three largest environmental organizations, Legambiente, WWF (Worldwide Fund for Nature), and Italia Nostra, met to plan the opposition to the agreement signed between the Italian and the French government to build the high-speed railway between Lyon and Turin. The agreement includes the highly productive regions of Northern Italy in the East-West transport corridors which are planned to connect continental Eurasia from the Atlantic shores of Europe to the Pacific coast of Asia.

The Turin-Lyon connection, in particular, is supposed to at least double the existing transport capacity, in expectation that trade between Italy and France will double by the year 2030, reaching 80 million tons/year. Today, rail carries only 8 million tons/year, whereas the road is overburdened with 31 million tons yearly. The existing rail capacity could transport only an additional 4-5 million tons, by adding trains during the night. The new high-speed Treno ad Alta Velocità (TAV) line is therefore designed not only to absorb the planned trade increase, but also to help move the highly polluting freight transport off the road to the railway, making roads safer for auto drivers.

Furthermore, most of the new traffic will take place inside a tunnel system, thus protecting the local population

from noise pollution as well. The centerpiece of the system is a new 54-kilometer tunnel at the French-Italian border, which will be the longest rail tunnel ever built under a mountain.

It is the tunnel which the anti-TAV mobilization has singled out, and turned into a disinformation target, with the aim of manipulating the population of the Val di Susa. Among other scare stories, reports were spread that by drilling the tunnel, uranium and asbestos material would be released from the mountain and spread into the valley, transforming the Val di Susa into an Italian Chernobyl. Further, it was alleged that during the 15-year-long construction of the tunnel, thousands of trucks would run in and out of the valley each day, transforming the life of its inhabitants into a living Hell.

Such scare stories manipulated the local population, which took to the streets en masse, to demonstrate against the TAV and block the construction site. No matter that such stories are spread by so-called “experts” who support anti-growth policies, and who promote the illusion that society could be sustained by “winding down” its mechanisms. Fear is irrational and prevents thinking. Under pressure, local administrators of all parties decided to ride the wave of popular protest. Thus, whereas most political parties, except the extremist Green Party and the leftist Rifondazione Comunista, are supporting the TAV project, their local representatives marched against their national and regional leaders. Following a demonstration of 70,000, a group of protesters occupied the premises of the tunnel construction site, thus preventing the work from starting.

The government decided to use force against the blockade. Overnight, Dec. 5-6, police raided the site where protesters had put up their tents, and brusquely removed the squatters. A few people were hospitalized. The raid prompted an escalation of the protests; the next day the population, led by their local mayors, reoccupied the site. More worrisome, hundreds of radical activists (*autonomisti*) moved from throughout the country into Val di Susa, prompting Interior Minister Giuseppe Pisanu to warn that the protest could degenerate into violent acts and expand to guerrilla warfare

## Corridor 5 Trans-European Rail Project



in metropolitan areas such as Turin, Milan, and Rome. A day of clashes between masked *autonomisti* and the police in Val di Susa provided credibility to Pisanu's warnings.

However, the opposition parties, and even the Lega Nord (Northern League), which is part of the government, warned that the government should abandon the confrontationist line and accept a "dialogue" with the local representatives, which the government finally did. On Dec. 10, a meeting between government ministers and Val di Susa local representatives took place, and it was agreed to suspend work at the construction site until a newly formed Commission for Environmental Impact (CIA) has given a green light.

However, the most radical faction of the protesters is against the TAV project altogether, and is currently hegemonic in the Val di Susa upsurge. Therefore, no question has been solved so far. Piedmont Governor Mercedes Bresso, a representative of the Center-Left coalition, has warned that if the current compromise fails, "the only alternative will be the militarization of the Val di Susa." Indeed, that is the most probable outcome in six months, when the deadline for the suspension of the work expires.

### The Oligarchy Behind the Scenes

In reality, the upsurge in Val di Susa is part of a broader phenomenon, which characterizes a new phase in the "New Dark Age Project" of the anti-nation-state oligarchy. This phenomenon is the emergence of mass-based, Flagellant-like movements, to be used as a battering ram against all existing investment projects, and ultimately against the institutions of the constitutional nation-states. Italy, as it was in the 1920s, seems to be the forerunner of this new fascism,

to be followed by other nations. To understand this better, one has to look at the real mastermind behind the environmentalist upsurge.

Among the three aforementioned environmentalist organizations, Legambiente, WWF, and Italia Nostra, which planned the Val di Susa "No-TAV" movement in 2003, the former two are spinoffs of the latter. Italia Nostra was founded in 1955, under directions from Elena Croce, the daughter of the famous Hegelian philosopher Benedetto Croce, who had been a supporter of Mussolini until 1936, and who co-founded the Congress for Cultural Freedom in 1950. Elena Croce was the "Popess" of Italian culture in the postwar period, on behalf of synarchist Anglo-American circles who represented the same financial forces that had backed both Hitler and Mussolini. Her task was to make sure that Italian Classical culture would be destroyed, both in literature and music, and replaced with "modern," i.e., Romantic, sex-obsessed productions. This was done through the Congress for Cultural Freedom, (CCF).

In 1955, Croce assigned a group of land-owning aristocrats, their court "intellectuals," and intelligence agents, the task of building an anti-progress organization which would combat and reverse the industrialization of Italy. This was Italia Nostra, among whose founding members one finds CCF personnel, such as Giorgio Bassani, and intelligence operatives like Michael Howard, a former British Psychological Warfare Board officer who married a Caetani princess and played an obscure role in the kidnapping of former Italian Prime Minister Aldo Moro. Italia Nostra began fighting urbanization policies, but remained an elite organization. In 1966, out of a rib of Italia Nostra was born the WWF-Italia, which developed a larger base, especially profiting from the ongoing anti-progress paradigm-shift in the 68er generation. In addition, when the traditional working-class parties and trade unions were ripe to fall for the new fascist paradigm, the leftist environmentalist organization Legambiente was founded in 1988, by former WWF activists.

Although today, Legambiente is the largest environmentalist group, in the forefront of every environmentalist initiative, it is still the oligarchy nested around Italia Nostra which determines strategies. Of course, your typical anti-war leftist member of Legambiente does not even know that he is manipulated by a bunch of oligarchs whose final aim is to deprive him of his constitutional rights—but that is the truth of the matter.

A couple of months ago, Italia Nostra chairwoman Countess Desideria Pasolini Dall'Onda, gave a rare television interview to issue a battle-cry for the new Jacobin mob. Countess Desideria is a founding member of Italia Nostra, and correspondingly old. She recounted how she pioneered, with Elena Croce, the founding of environmentalism in Italy, after the model of British "conservationist" institutions. She then explained that the task for the second millennium is to

fight “infrastructure” altogether, and to prevent “urbanization.” She singled out one infrastructure project, in particular, the Messina Bridge between Sicily and mainland Italy, as the project which must absolutely be defeated. The problem however, she said, is the new legislation introduced in 2001, called “Legge Obiettivo,” which establishes a “fast lane” for infrastructural projects that are considered to be strategic for the nation.

The Legge Obiettivo has indeed accelerated decisions for a number of projects, including the Messina Bridge, but also all TAV projects in Italy, by simply restricting negotiations on environmental impact to a body formed by the government and the regional authorities, thus bypassing local obstructionism. On its side, the regional government has the responsibility of negotiating with local authorities where the project is supposed to be built, and achieve consensus, eventually with the use of compensation.

### The Bonapartist Card?

Whereas the Legge Obiettivo has allowed the bypassing of local obstructionism, which de facto has prevented all major infrastructural projects for 30 years, a question must nevertheless be raised as to whether the national government and the Piedmont regional governor have been remiss by failing to carry out any kind of information campaign and/or negotiations which could have prevented the upsurge of the protest. Opponents of the Berlusconi government point out that on the French side, where work on the tunnel has already started, a large information campaign had been carried out by the government. On the Italian side, perhaps a pre-emptive education of the local administrators could have worked to that effect.

Such a question is legitimate because in the oligarchical scenario, not only “leftist” Jacobin forces are at work, but also the “right-wing” reaction. Many doubts have arisen, for instance, on the *nacht und nebel* action of the police, which recalled the brutality used in Genoa, in the year 2001, against the headquarters of the anti-G8 demonstrators. Such actions, some are warning, have the effect of escalating the conflict. In the past, explosive devices were placed but not ignited, in a demonstrative act, against the TAV project. It is easy to imagine what could happen when the conflict escalates.

One member of the Italian Senate, Gigi Malabarba, has warned that the current head of the Italian police, Gianni De Gennaro, is allied to the U.S. neo-con faction, and has ambitions of becoming the “Italian Negroponte,” i.e., the czar of a militarized “anti-terrorism” war. The Genoa events were not the only product of De Gennaro’s tactics; even the assassination of Italian military intelligence official Nicola Calipari in Iraq, by U.S. forces, has to be seen in this process, Malabarba warned.

Thus, it would not be surprising if this neo-con faction in Italian police and military institutions plays the “Bonapartist

card,” using the Jacobin upsurge as a pretext. After all, this faction is controlled by the same oligarchy that deploys the Jacobins. History repeats itself.

However, the insanity of the anti-TAV opposition has provoked a significant healthy reaction in the country in favor of infrastructure. People can see that the same political forces, for instance the Greens, who are supporting the No-TAV movement, are those which have prevented the construction of energy plants, roads, and even incinerators for garbage. Today, Italy has to import nuclear-produced electricity from France, Switzerland, and even Slovenia, because Italy’s nuclear program was forced to shut down; until very recently, daily trains loaded with garbage were travelling from the southern Campania region to Germany, in order to burn garbage, because incinerator plants were blocked by local opposition; and so on.

Interpreting the general mood, state President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, a popular figure, declared that “Italy cannot risk being isolated” by failing to build modern transport infrastructure. It is hoped that in the remaining weeks, a pro-TAV, bipartisan majority among political forces will succeed in affecting local institutions and isolating the radicals. If that occurs, the enemy has lost a battle. However, the war can be won only if the systemic reforms indicated by Lyndon LaRouche are implemented.

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