

## For Steve Bannon "Italy is the Center of the Political Universe"

Judith Harris (March 26, 2019)



ROME -- Steve Bannon, mastermind behind the Donald Trump presidential campaign in 2016, is hunkered down this week in Rome, the city he calls "the center of the political universe." Bannon, who is an avid admirer of Italy's Deputy Premier Matteo Salvini, head of the increasingly dominant right-wing political party the Lega, has scheduled meetings here with as many as ten leaders of other European populist parties, from Western as well as from Eastern Europe.

"We have no formal arrangement, we won't sign any formal document, but we are evangelists who are meeting to talk together informally," he said. As for his own role, "These parties are sophisticated. The best I can do is tell them to stay on your message. None of them needs me to win, but I am their cheerleader."



Speaking at a packed two-hour press conference March 26 at the Foreign Press Association in Rome, he said that [Marine Le Pen](#) [2], President of the National Rally party in France, is perhaps the most outstanding politician on the scene today. Recent polls in France show Le Pen and [Emmanuel Macron](#) [3] almost in a tie as they gear up for the May election, with Le Pen trailing behind the French president by just 1%. Bannon also expressed admiration for the German populists of [Alternative für Deutschland](#) [4] and for Brazilian President [Jair Bolsonaro](#) [5], enemy of environmentalists and gays, who has dubbed the United Nations "a bunch of communists."

"These days the populist sovereignty movement has tremendous support, including from young people," said Bannon, adding that this upsurge in popularity was amply demonstrated in the March 22 vote for regional parliaments in the Netherlands. In that Dutch election involving 570 legislators, presumably a foretaste of the election to the European Parliament in late May, the far-right populist newcomer Forum for Democracy won more votes than any other party. "If the momentum continues as it is now, we populists just may end up with 50 to 100 MPs in the European Parliament," he predicted.

Is there a China-Russian axis? he was asked. China is a problem, he conceded. "I love the Chinese people but not its government. As for Vladimir Putin's Russia, "the atmosphere between the US and Russia is currently poisonous, but going forward we must befriend Russia," he said. The goal is to eventually bring together the entire Judeo-Christian West, which includes Russia. It will take time: "Bear in mind that Russia's GDP is smaller than that of the state of New York, that it suffers from a demographic crisis, that it lives off natural resources, that it is managed by oligarchs and that it's a kleptocracy."

The mainstream media are, in his view, "a disgrace." They are supposed to be self-regulating, yet no reporter is ever held accountable. "I think it's time they should be," he said, in words that, to most journalists, sound disturbing; worldwide over 250 journalists are now imprisoned because of their work, according to the annual survey of the committee to Protect Journalists, as reported in CNBC.

Particularly harsh words were reserved for Pope Francis. "He is the Vicar of Christ." But when the pope talks politics at mass, as for instance when he spoke about the situation at the US-Mexican border, "He seems to think that all the world's problems are due to populism. Instead of politics or from the pulpit the pope should start focussing on the metastasizing character of the Catholic Church, which in the US is in terrible financial troubles through the RICO indictments."

Several US prosecutors have attempted to use [RICO](#) [6] (the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act), which dates from 1970, to prosecute Catholic Church dioceses for covering up child sex abuse. "This is the worst crisis for the Catholic Church in all time," he concluded. Bannon added that the pope has signed a secret agreement with China after a Vatican-China summit meeting, which he never talked about, nor released any details.

Next week Bannon plans to continue his evangelizing and cheerleading in Spain.



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