

Words I wish I hadn't heard

Judith Harris (January 01, 2011)



2010 witnessed the ultimate decadence of the Italian political discourse

Rome – The political year isn't over, but I can't wait for it to end. Not so long ago Italian political discourse, conservative as well as progressive and beyond, still found inspiration in the lessons of World War II and the postwar longing for a democratic way of life. Alas, these days that discourse has come to resemble the smelly barnyard muck that students dumped in front of the house of Education Minister Mariastella Gelmini in Bergamo recently.

So here's my personal compilation of nastiness and trash talk—the words I wish I hadn't heard over



the past few months. Please vote for the best.

Emilio Fede (director of TG 4; name translates to “Fido”): “The Premier is single. Since he lost his mother his life has become much sadder. If he wants to have a bit of fun one evening a week, I see no harm in it.” To journalist Lorenzo Galeazzi, Nov. 4

Silvio Berlusconi: “I’m a star. At international summits everybody wants to be photographed with me. It’s because I’m a tycoon as well as prime minister.” Dec. 6

Mara Carfagna: “She [Alessandra Mussolini] is a vaiassa [Neapolitan dialect for sluttish kitchen wench].” Quoted from *Il Mattino*, Naples

Alessandra Mussolini: “She [Mara Carfagna] needs a punch in the face.”

Silvio Berlusconi: “That TG3 journalist [RAI 3d channel TV newsreader] would have done better to present himself as a reporter for TeleKabul...Actually TG3 is even worse.” Nov. 24

Hon. Marco Reguzzoni, 39, Northern League whip in the Chamber of Deputies: “I don’t think girl children should be brought up to think they are inferior—I myself have two girls.” Well, duh. On the other hand, here’s finally something that links his anti-immigrant political party with the Muslim world. Rai Radio, Nov. 24

Daniela Santanchè (Pdl): “Wanna know what I think of Fini? That he should resign right away for his own good. On the human level he’s a shit.” Aug. 13

Giorgio Stracquadanio (Pdl): “Let’s be clear. Fini should be chucked out of the Chamber presidency, period. If necessary there’s always the Boffo treatment.” Boffo was the editor of the Catholic magazine who was hounded out of his job on the basis of a now admittedly false dossier of allegations that he is gay. July 31.

Alessandra Mussolini (Pdl) on Italo Bocchino: “If I were in Berlusconi’s place, I’d have him decapitated. He deserves the Ann Bolyt treatment.” Aug. 12

Silvio Berlusconi: “In consideration of the blows we are dealing out to the Mafia, no one today can exclude with any certainty that some of the things that are happening aren’t fruit of a vendetta of the malavita.” Nov. 4

Giulio Tremonti, Treasury Secretary: “At a time of belt-tightening, you can't eat Culture.” Oct. 12

Sandro Bondi, Culture Minister: “Anyone calling for a vote of confidence over the collapse of the Pompeii gladiator domus is not bringing shame on me, but on himself for doing so... There are no responsibilities of my own or of others in what happened. Otherwise I would resign.” Nov. 11

Giuseppe Spadaccini, testifying to an inquiring magistrate in re an alleged political kickback by way of thanks for supporting his bid worth E 50 million to supply civil protection airplane fleet: “I [i.e., his company, Sorem Srl] had obtained the bid for the Civil Protection for Candair. But Guido Bertolaso wanted me out—he wanted to revoke the contract. I am convinced he did so because his brother [Antonio, colonel in the air force] at that time was its director general.” Lest one overly sympathize, Spadaccini was among a group of 13 businessmen arrested Oct. 21 for alleged tax dodging in the amount of E 90 million.

Silvio Berlusconi: “It is far better to look at pretty girls than to be a gay.” NOV. 2 THE WINNER!

Sandro Bondi: “I desire to be respected even by a newspaper that does this kind of work [Ed: *Il Fatto Quotidiano*]. This happened because of a very painful situation. It was completely personal, private and a bitter event.” In re the Culture Ministry he heads handing over a E 25,000 consultancy fee to the future ex-husband of Bondi’s partner Maela Repetti, and also a sinecure of “little more than E 1,000 net” to the son of the future ex. A journalist’s comment: “Yeah maybe, but the money was public.”



Andrea Carandini, archaeologist and chairman of the Culture Ministry's advisory board: "Next year we will get E 53 million for all the Italian archaeological sites, more or less what a top manager gets for his golden handshake." Nov 12. (in *Il Giornale*) So why not resign in protest? Salvatore Settis did—and was replaced by Carandini.

Luisa Bossa, former mayor of Herculaneum (10 years): "If he comes incognito to Pompeii, [Culture Minister Sandro] Bondi will see septic tanks for the bathrooms made for building sites where they excavate only a few meters from the ancient walls. He will see Corinthian columns and arches in Roman recticulate that are used as clothes hangers for jackets, maybe with some nails stuck into the ancient walls. ...A picture of desolation, yet Bondi criticizes those who speak of it." Oct. 5

Silvio Berlusconi (joking at himself): "Ruby is a problem. Where can I fix her up with a job?" Cited in *Corriere della Sera*, Nov. 15

Sandro Bondi, Minister of Culture:

A Silvio

Vita assaporata

Vita preceduta

Vita inseguita

Vita amata

Vita vitale

Vita ritrovata

Vita splendente

Vita disvelata

Vita nova

--Vanity Fair, republished Apr. 27

Translation:

Life savoured/Life preceded/Life chased/Life loved/Life vital, Life found once more, Life splendid/Life unveiled/New life

Umberto Bossi (Lega Nord): "Casini is shit [stronzo]. He's one of those guys that, having no merits of their own, insult other people. Casini is what is left over from the Christian Democrats—of those bad guys [furfanti e farabutti] who betrayed the North." Aug. 23

The year was rung out with a real winner. From the shadowy mirrors-upon-mirrors world of espionage, counter-espionage and sheer hocus straight from Austin Powers came the phony-sounding revelation of a phony "plot" that supposedly would have a phony gun fire but miss a phony shot at the real Gianfranco Fini, who would then automatically blame the Premier, Silvio Berlusconi, who would be therefore either weakened, or, alternatively--because innocent of blame--somehow have taken benefit from the fraudulent near-miss. The mind reels, but anyway, here are the revelations made Dec. 27 by the editor of the daily *Libero*, Maurizio Belpietro:

"Weird stories regarding [Chamber of Deputies President] Fini are circulating. I don't know if they have any basis, or if they are just made-up stories--traps to lead us astray. If I decided to reveal



them it's because some individuals, of whom I ascertained their identity and profession, came to me and assured me of the truth of what they said...It would be up to others to ascertain the facts... True? False? I don't know. The people who whispered the plan to me did not appear nuts...in exchange for the information they asked nothing. Headline seekers? Blackmailers? Something else? Boh! [translation: boh!] Why did I decide to write of this affair? Because if it's true one should be worried, but if it is false it's to ask just why these stories pop up just now."

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