

The Anglo-Venetians Behind Santander

by John Hoefle

Most people, when thinking of banks such as Banco Santander, tend to think of them as individual institutions, when, in truth, the world of finance is dominated by networks of institutions whose connections are sometimes only partially revealed, and often hidden from view. When it comes to “high” finance, the world is much smaller than you may suspect.

Banco Santander is a good example of how the oligarchic system works. On the surface, it appears to be a regional Spanish bank whose savvy has catapulted it into an elite international operation; but when you peer beneath that facade, you find yourself very quickly in the dark heart of the Anglo-Venetian empire. Behind Banco Santander stand some of the world’s most powerful, and criminal, forces.

As we peel back the Santander onion, we will find the British monarchy, the core of Venetian finance, and a host of other, unsavory elements. Below, we update and expand on some of the findings presented in EIR’s 2004 feature on Santander (see *Documentation*).

Hidden Connections

Banco Santander is a member of a European banking consortium, the **Inter-Alpha Group**. Formed in 1971, the group consists of 11 banks. In addition to Santander, the group includes the Royal Bank of Scotland, Italy’s Intesa Sanpaolo, France’s Société Générale, Germany’s Commerzbank, The Netherlands’ ING, Belgium’s KBC, Sweden’s Nordea, the National Bank of Greece, Portugal’s Banco Espírito Santo, and Ireland’s AIB. Their combined operations cover much of Europe, including significant penetration into the former Soviet bloc, the United States, and Ibero-America.

The Inter-Alpha Group itself is but part of the picture, as the real power lies in what controls the institutions themselves, and in what it uses those institutions to do.

The power behind the **Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS)**, is the British monarchy. Among RBS’s hold-

ings is **Coutts & Co.**, perhaps the premier private bank in the world. Coutts, whose logo consists of three crowns, provides discreet banking services for members of the British royal family, foreign royals, and many prominent imperial agents around the world.

RBS is one of two firms to strike a strategic alliance with Banco Santander. The other is **Assicurazioni Generali** (“Generali”), the Venetian insurance giant which sits like a spider at the center of the web of Venetian finance. The chairman of Generali, Antoine Bernheim, spent most of his career at Lazard, the powerful investment bank. Bernheim is a director of two members of the Inter-Alpha Group, Banco Santander and Intesa Sanpaolo, where he is deputy chairman. Ana Patricia Botín, who learned banking at JP Morgan and now sits on the board of Banco Santander and chairs its Banesto subsidiary, is a director of Generali. José Maria Amusátegui, a former co-president of Santander, sits on the Generali General Council, and the two firms hold cross-ownership positions.

The strategic relationship between RBS and Banco Santander was also displayed in their joint bid, with the Dutch-Belgian **Fortis**, to take over Dutch banking giant ABN Amro in 2007. Joined by several hedge funds, the three banks broke up a deal between Barclays and ABN Amro, and took the bank for themselves.

Banco Santander, and the Inter-Alpha Group as a whole, should be viewed as an instrumentality of the British monarchy and the Venetians. Such interlocking networks are a key component of how they run the world. The number of countries in which these banks operate is too large to list here, but includes every major nation in the world, from Western and Eastern Europe, to the BRIC nations—Brazil, Russia, India, and China—to North and South America, Asia, and Africa. From financial centers to offshore havens, from nations they control to nations they wish to take over, these banks and others like them are active.

RBS is a major player in the United States, owning Citizens Financial Group—a top-20 bank holding company—and Greenwich Capital Markets. But RBS also has a direct connection to **Goldman Sachs**. Prior to the 2008 takeover of RBS by the British government, one of the directors of the bank was **Peter Sutherland**, the chairman of Goldman’s London arm, Goldman Sachs International. Sutherland is also chairman of BP, the British oil giant; chair of the London School of Economics Council; a member of the steering committee of Prince Philip’s Bilderberger Group; and the European



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Assicurazioni Generali, the Venetian insurance giant, founded 1831, sits like a fat spider at the center of the web of Venetian finance. Along with the Royal Bank of Scotland, it has struck a strategic alliance with Banco Santander.

chairman of the Trilateral Commission. Sutherland made his career pushing globalization, as director general of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and its successor, the World Trade Organization. Such connections shed an interesting light on the financial and political activities of Goldman Sucks, the “vampire squid” whose CEO claims to be doing “God’s work.”

Intesa Sanpaolo counts among its predecessor banks Banca Commerciale Italiana (BCI), the bank where the infamous Propaganda-2 Masonic Lodge was formed. BCI also owned a significant chunk of Lehman Brothers in the 1970s. Lehman also had cross-ownership positions with Generali, going back to the 1950s, as did Lazard. Intesa Sanpaolo claims to be the number one bank in Serbia; number two in Albania, Croatia, Hungary, and Slovakia; fifth in Bosnia and Herzegovina; and sixth in Egypt.

At the time BCI made its investment in Lehman Brothers, the chairman of Lehman was Peter Peterson, the man who later founded the pirate-equity giant **Blackstone Group**, and one of the leading funders of the fascist austerity movement in the United States. Blackstone owns just under 3% of Generali, a connection which we take to indicate where Blackstone gets a significant part of its funding. It also suggests where Peterson gets his political agenda, as Generali was one of the creators of Benito Mussolini’s corporatist fascism.

The Slime Mold

Lord Benjamin Disraeli, the British prime minister in the late 1800s, once observed that, “The world is governed by very different personages from what is imagined by those who are not behind the scenes.”

Disraeli was in a position to know. The Santanders, Goldman Sachs, and Blackstones of the world are, despite their seeming power, but chess pieces on a board controlled by unseen hands. This is the method by which the Anglo-Venetian empire runs the world, and the system which

the United States was founded to defeat.

Lyndon LaRouche has characterized this oligarchic system as a slime mold, an organism which survives by adapting to changing circumstances, shedding components that are no longer needed and absorbing those that are, in a constant battle to preserve its existence. Its only real imperative is to maintain and expand its power, inexorably and ruthlessly.

The key to understanding this enemy is to view it as a system, from the top down, rather than from the bottom up, as a collection of individual institutions. The institutions are merely containers for capabilities, to be reorganized and discarded as needed.

Coutts was founded in 1692, and has gone through several incarnations. Today, it is owned by RBS, but its Ibero-American operations have been sold to Banco Santander.

Generali was founded in 1831, out of a collection of

smaller Venetian insurance companies. It is the dominant financial power in Italy, but its influence stretches around the world.

These institutions would seem to be timeless, but that is an illusion. That they have survived so far, does not make them permanent.

Those who would entrust their future to banks like Banco Santander, would do well to reflect upon the fate of Barings, the British bank once called the sixth great power in Europe. Barings, founded in 1762, was a power for over two centuries, until it collapsed in 1995. Its carcass was sold to ING, another member of the Inter-Alpha Group, for a mere £1.

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Documentation

London's Control Over Banco Santander

As of Sept. 30, 2008, Spain's Banco Santander was the largest bank in the entire Eurozone, and the ninth-biggest in the world, based on market capitalization. And it is run, top-down, by the City of London through the British Monarchy's Royal Bank of Scotland. The following profile of Santander (previously known as BSCH) is excerpted from the July 2, 2004 EIR feature, "Empire Strikes Back: Spanish Banks Recolonize Ibero-America," by Dennis Small.

Leading the way in this forced march of Ibero-America into globalized banking—under which no sovereign nation-state shall survive—is the above mentioned BSCH.... The BSCH, with 15 banks spread across Ibero-America, is the second largest bank in the sub-continent, with \$77 billion in assets [9% of total bank assets in Ibero-America—ed]. Only the state-owned giant Banco do Brasil is larger, with just under \$80 billion in assets.

The BSCH is headed by Emilio Botín, a fourth-generation oligarchic banker who is widely estimated to be the richest man in Spain. He is an open advocate of speculative banking—he calls this “pure banking”—rather than industrial financing, and he has forged strategic alliances between the BSCH and a number of cen-

tral players in the international synarchist banking apparatus: the Royal Bank of Scotland (one of the most powerful British banks, with intimate family links to the royal household); the Morgan banking empire; and the powerful Venetian insurance giant, Assicurazioni Generali, which, among other things, financed Mussolini's rise to power in Italy.

No surprise, then, that Botín is a major backer of Spain's Franco-ite party, the Partido Popular (PP), and its recently defeated Prime Minister José Marí Aznar. In fact, according to various accounts, it was Botín who “created” Aznar, flying the little known PP leader to London in his private jet for a hush-hush meeting with select British bankers, prior to his 1996 election as Prime Minister. Similarly, Botín reportedly brags that he “owns” Rodrigo Rato, Aznar's Finance Minister, who was appointed as the new head of the International Monetary Fund in March 2004.

As the Madrid correspondent for the London *Economist* put it, Botín and Aznar “wanted to put Spain back where they felt it belonged at the center of a resurgent hispanic world,” i.e., they seek *the Spanish re-colonization of Ibero-America on behalf of international financial interests....*

A Well-Named Family

The Banco de Santander is an old-line financial institution, owned since its creation by the super-rich, and well-named, Botín family (“botín” is Spanish for “loot,” or “booty”). Santander's current President, Emilio Botín-Sanz de Sautuola y García de los Ríos, is often listed as the wealthiest man in Spain. (In 1999, Forbes put his net worth at \$3.4 billion.) He is the great-grandson of the bank's founder, Emilio Botín y López, who established the bank in 1857 to meet the financial needs of the trade links between the northern Spanish port of Santander and Ibero-America.

Like his father and grandfather before him, the current Emilio Botín takes pride in his bloodline, and intends to keep the bank in the family. His likely successor is rumored to be his daughter, the Harvard and JP Morgan-trained Ana Patricia Botín, who currently sits on the BSCH board and is president of Banesto bank, a BSCH subsidiary. Emilio's brother Jaime is also on the BSCH board.

Emilio runs the bank personally, like the patriarch that he is. At BSCH, according to a popular Madrid joke, there are only two kinds of employees: *Botines* and *botones* (Spanish for messenger boys).

Trained in Law and Economics at the Jesuit-run University of Deusto in Bilbao, the current Botín took over Santander from his father, Emilio Botín-Sanz de Sautuola y López, in 1986. Father and son were both committed, according to the Spanish daily *El Mundo*, to “the end of Santander bank’s vocation as an industrial bank, and the beginning of its sole dedication to traditional financial business.... Botín has always been in favor of a model of pure banking.” This approach guided the bank’s major mergers and acquisitions over the years (Banesto in 1994, Banco Central Hispano in 1999), which brought BSCH to its current position as Spain’s top bank, and one of Europe’s leaders in speculative derivatives trading, in particular.

A year after assuming the presidency of Banco de Santander, in November 1987, Botín signed a strategic agreement with the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) to swap 10% of each others shares, and joined RBS’s board. Sir George Mathewson, the President of RBS and President of the Association of British Bankers, likewise sits on the BSCH board today.

The Madrid correspondent for the London *Economist*, Adela Gooch, put this down to “the Botín family’s penchant for the Anglo-Saxon way of doing business”; but more than Anglophilia is involved. RBS is one of the United Kingdom’s oldest, leading financial institutions, which is at the heart of Synarchist banking layers internationally. As *EIR* explained in its 1997 study of foreign banking in Ibero-America, Rt. Hon. The Earl of Airlie is a prominent member of the RBS board of directors, and he is “the brother-in-law of Princess Alexandra, Queen Elizabeth’s first cousin; a Privy Councillor, and is Lord Chamberlain of the Queen’s Household—i.e., he heads up the innermost sanctum around the Queen. Until 1984, he was chairman of Schroeders PLC, the London merchant banking group which helped finance Hitler’s rise to power in the 1930s.”

Furthermore, the international private banking arm of RBS is Coutts & Co.—the private bankers to the Queen. BSCH’s relationship with RSB is so cozy that in May 2003, according to the Santander web site, BSCH “reached an agreement with The Royal Bank of Scotland Group, under which [BSCH] acquired the private banking business in Ibero-America of its affiliate Coutts & Co.” One of the law firms involved in the transaction put Coutts & Co.’s assets in Ibero-America at \$2.6 billion.

The Venetian ‘Fondi’

In 1999, Botín’s BSCH struck another strategic alliance with a second hard-core Synarchist financial institution: Assicurazioni Generali, the infamous and ultra-powerful Venetian insurance company. The 1992 edition of *EIR*’s best-seller *Dope, Inc.* describes Generali as follows: “Among modern financial institutions, the Assicurazioni Generali of Venice, the heir to the old Venetian fortunes, provides the most clues to the operations of the *fondi*. The ‘Generali,’ as an insurance organization, is a clearing house for the operations of numerous *fondi*, each one represented by its frontman, one of the principal European investment banks. Its board of directors consists of the principal banking fortunes of Western Europe.... Europe’s two most powerful investment banks, Lazard Frères and the Banque Paribas, are the largest stockholders in the Assicurazioni through a variety of shells.”

It is also well known that Generali played an instrumental role in bringing Mussolini to power in Italy.

BSCH’s relationship to Generali is not unlike the one it has with RBS: they generally swap spit. Generali’s President, Antoine Bernheim, sits on the BSCH board of directors, and the company owns 1.1% of BSCH’s stock and 20% of the stock of Santander’s insurance subsidiary. BSCH, in turn, owns 1.2% of Mediobanca, the main shareholder for Generali, and has a representative on the insurance company’s General Council. In late 2003, Generali also acquired BSCH’s 13.22% stake in Banco Vitalicio. According to a Sept. 23, 2003 Reuters wire, “both groups will maintain their global alliance, and are even studying broadening it to Latin America.”

In 2001, then BSCH co-president Jose María Amusátegui was a member of Generali’s General Council, along with former Governor of the Bank of Spain José Ramón Álvarez Rendueles; American drug lawyer and former ADL head Kenneth Bialkin; and Mexican vulture banker Roberto González Barrera of Banorte, among others. The extremely broad statutory function of the General Council, according to Generali’s Annual Report 2001, is “providing high-quality advice in order to promote the most successful attainment of company objectives ... [and it] has particular competence regarding issues arising from extension of the Company’s geographical presence on international insurance markets and, more generally, international insurance and finance issues affecting the Company and Group interests.”