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The Last Supper

Opus Dei's Information Office in London has sent a written protest to Constable & Robinson, the publishers of 'The Last Supper', a book by author and journalist Philip Willan.

17/08/2007

'The Last Supper' purports to investigate the death of Italian banker Roberto Calvi and the collapse of the Banco Ambrosiano in 1981. Unfortunately it recycles old and discredited claims that Opus Dei was involved somehow. All such

theories are totally false. Opus Dei had nothing whatsoever to do with Roberto Calvi or any part of the Banco Ambrosiano affair.

FULL TEXT OF LETTER FOLLOWS:

Constable & Robinson Ltd

3 The Lanchesters

162 Fulham Palace Road

London W6 9ER

Cc Philip Willan

27 June 2007

Dear Sir or Madam

I am writing to you to register a strong protest about a serious calumny that is repeated in the book 'The Last Supper' (subtitled '*The Mafia, the Masons and the Killing of Roberto Calvi*'), written by Philip

Willan and published by Robinson, 2007.

It is stated in the introduction that *‘the real Opus Dei, with its secrecy, conservative values and attachment to material wealth, plays a key role in the story’*. (Introduction, p.xxix). This theory of Opus Dei’s involvement in the Calvi Case is developed throughout the book.

Opus Dei had nothing to do with either the death of Roberto Calvi, or any proposed bailing out of Banco Ambrosiano. The organisation has repeatedly said so in several public statements which have been quoted in many media outlets. The book makes no mention of any of these denials.

For instance, Cardinal Palazzini is described as *‘the most senior representative of Opus Dei at that time’* (p.186), and again as *‘Opus Dei’s senior representative’* (p.187) and an

‘Opus Dei cardinal’ (p.188). This is a direct statement to the effect that Opus Dei was involved in negotiations to bail out Banco Ambrosiano.

It is extraordinary that such a spectacular piece of ‘information’ should have been given without the author or publisher ever checking whether Palazzini had any sort of connection of Opus Dei. In fact he never was a member of Opus Dei, nor a ‘representative’ of it. Faced with such an easily available fact, the theory that Opus Dei was a party to negotiations that Calvi might have had with the Vatican simply crumbles away. So why was the question never asked? What other ‘facts’ in the book are due to a failure to do the research properly?

There are several other points in the text where Opus Dei is drawn into the narrative in a way that is either

unjustified or biased. I attach more details in an annexe to this letter.

Rupert Cornwell, author of *'God's Banker'* (1983), probably the best-known book about the Calvi affair, stated in an interview (RTE Radio 1, Ireland, 31 August 1983), *'well as the book makes clear again, the Opus Dei connection was something which Calvi probably dreamed up himself'*. *'God's Banker'* appears in the references in *'The Last Supper'*. It would have been sensational in 1983 to assign Opus Dei a role, as in 2007; but Rupert Cornwell had more respect for the truth than to do that.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Soane

Director, Information Office

**Annexe: 'The Last Supper' and
Opus Dei (Extracts)**

Opus Dei is mentioned at least twenty one times in the course of ‘The Last Supper, The Mafia, the Masons and the killing of Roberto Calvi’. The first reference occurs in the introduction, the last on the back cover. Opus Dei had nothing whatsoever to do with the Calvi affair.

p.xxix, Introduction: *‘the real Opus Dei, with its secrecy, conservative values and attachment to material wealth, plays a key role in the story.’*

FACT: Opus Dei had nothing whatever to do with the Calvi affair. The writer never contacted any of Opus Dei’s information offices or centres in Italy, the UK or any other country, in order to check his facts. Neither did the publisher.

p.45: *‘Her [i.e. Anna Calvi’s] father told her he was planning to resolve his operations with the Vatican Bank [i.e. the IOR] by bringing in Opus Dei.’*

FACT: Calvi never had any contact with Opus Dei. The book treats such ‘plans’ as having been accomplished ‘facts’, yet never once quotes any of the denials issued by Opus Dei, quoted in many sources.

FACT: None of the people named as having dealt with Calvi in his last days are or were members of Opus Dei.

p.179: *‘Cavallo claimed that Pope John Paul II had received Roberto Calvi in secret in January 1982 to discuss the creation of a large Catholic bank to be entrusted to Opus Dei.’ (...)* *‘his charges cannot simply be swatted away.’*

FACT: The Pope never received Roberto Calvi: the Vatican has stated this categorically. Once again the book gives credence to an outrageously false allegation without quoting the relevant denial, which was published in the Osservatore

Romano (the Vatican newspaper), 8 October 1982.

p.186: *‘Cardinal Pietro Palazzini, the most senior Opus Dei representative at that time.’*

p.187: *‘Cardinal Pietro Palazzini, the prefect of the Vatican’s Congregation for the Causes of Saints and Opus Dei’s senior representative.’*

p.188: *‘Calvi was present at a third meeting between Calvi and the Opus Dei cardinal’* [i.e. Cardinal Palazzini].

FACT: Palazzini was not a member of Opus Dei, nor a ‘representative’ of it. It is completely false to write that he was an ‘Opus Dei cardinal’. The ‘information’ that Palazzini was a member (or ‘representative’) of Opus Dei is so obviously sensational that it seems incredible that it could have been passed for publication without some check being performed.

p.188: *‘Other sources, including Francesco Pazienza in his memoir, suggest that the money actually came from Opus Dei and that the financial favour was repaid when Pope Paul II promoted the organisation to the status of ‘personal prelature’. The prelature, the first in the history of the Church, meant that Opus Dei reported directly to a Vatican Official appointed by the Pope rather than coming under the authority of local bishops in the various diocese where it operated.’*

FACT: Opus Dei was definitely not the source of the finance.

FACT: The accusation above that Opus Dei and Pope John Paul II respectively bought and sold an ecclesiastical favour, a serious offense (in Church terms) normally known as ‘simony’, is completely false.

FACT: Becoming a Personal Prelature does not constitute a promotion over

what Opus Dei was before, a Secular Institute. Opus Dei still reports to the Pope as before, but through a different Vatican Congregation (i.e. department).

p.250: *‘Both women [Roberto Calvi's wife and daughter] believed that Opus Dei was the key to solving the Ambrosiano's financial crisis and here was a financier allegedly representing Opus Dei's interests who appeared to offer an answer to the banker's prayers.’*

FACT: Whoever Jaimes Berti may have represented, he did not represent Opus Dei.

Back cover: *‘with a cast of characters to put The Da Vinci Code to shame – including Opus Dei, the mafia, the Vatican and the governments of Italy, USA and the UK.’*

FACT: As the facts above demonstrate, Opus Dei had nothing

to do with the Calvi affair. Yet it is assigned a central role on the back cover.

General Comments:

When Clara Calvi first claimed in 1982 that her husband had been seeking financial help from Opus Dei, the then Regional Vicar of Opus Dei in Italy, Mgr. Mario Lantini, wrote to Mrs Calvi and her son, saying that Opus Dei and its members had nothing to do with the affair, and asking on what evidence they had based their declarations. He never received a reply.

If Roberto Calvi really did have a plan to contact Opus Dei, he greatly misunderstood Opus Dei: it could never have got involved in the rescue of a bank. It is not a financial institution; the concept would be repugnant to its members. But in any case the fact remains that Calvi never got in touch with Opus Dei.

Beginning with a press release on 20 August 1982, Opus Dei has several times stated that it had nothing to do with Roberto Calvi, nor the Banco Ambrosiano. None of these public statements are cited in the book by Philip Willan.

Several people and institutions in the narrative are incorrectly named as ‘representatives’ of Opus Dei. Among the more central characters so identified are Cardinal Palazzini and Venezuelan businessman Jaimes Berti. Neither of them were representatives of Opus Dei, or members, as a request for information by the author or publisher of this book would have confirmed.

One is left to conclude that checking out these facts would have killed the theory of Opus Dei’s involvement. Therefore it was convenient not to.

Left unanswered is how the publisher could have let it pass.

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