

The showdown at the Grand Hotel: trouble mounts for the Palme Commission

by Umberto Pascali

The chaotic mid-town Roman traffic was brought to a halt in front of the Grand Hotel by a most unusual demonstration against the joint conference of commissions named for two of the Socialist International's most notorious figures—Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme and the chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), Willy Brandt. The Jan. 20 meeting of Palme's "Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues" and Brandt's "Independent Commission on International Development Issues" was about to begin minutes later inside the hotel, and the demonstrators' point was that both commissions are anything but independent—of the KGB.

The demonstration, organized by the Partito Operaio Europeo (European Labor Party), sported a large banner reading: "Brandt, Palme, Arbatov: Get the KGB Out of Italy." Three Italian citizens appeared in the guise of Patriarch Pimen, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Brandt, and Palme. "Pimen," brandishing his pastoral crook, carried a poster saying: "We will give you eternal peace—The West is rotten and corrupt—SS-20s are a sign from God." "Brandt" clutched a large flask of Frascati wine decorated with a Nobel Peace Prize medal adorned with a swastika, symbolic of the fascist economic policies of his so-called development commission. The Brandt Commission's policies are overtly modeled on those of Hitler's Economics Minister Hjalmar Schacht. Thousands of Roman citizens took a leaflet titled "KGB orgies in the Grand Hotel," which included a translation of an article attacking Brandt as a KGB asset which had appeared the day before in the German daily *Die Welt*.

A few hours later, the two leading Soviets attending the conference issued an official denial of the trio's charges, reported in Italian papers under the ironic headline, "Soviet Members of Brandt and Palme Commissions: We Are Not KGB Agents." Georgi Arbatov of the Soviet Central Committee and General Mikhail Milshtein, a "scientific adviser" to the Palme outfit, had been accosted while entering the Grand Hotel by a frantic "Pimen" who said, "Arbatov my friend, you are the only one I can trust. These two bums, Willy and Olof, I gave them so much money to fund the peace movement and they spent it all on alcohol and orgies."

The demonstration at the Grand Hotel and its aftermath were only the latest episode in a fight that exploded in December when Brandt was exposed for attempting to suppress documents about a secret Socialist International meeting in Managua, Nicaragua last year, which plotted driving U.S.

influence out of the Caribbean. The fight has already made a deep fissure among the parties of the Socialist International, founded in London at the end of World War II as the forum for socialist parties which did not want to be tied to the Soviet Union.

On one side are the Northern parties committed to appeasing Russia—the Brandt-Palme-Kreisky triad—and on the other, the "Mediterranean" parties loyal to the Atlantic alliance. Since Brandt's SPD voted last November to oppose stationing the Euromissiles and escalated its push for unilateral disarmament, the party has become Moscow's biggest Trojan horse in the West.

The Rome meeting ended Jan. 22 with a resolution calling for a one-year "nuclear moratorium," exactly what Arbatov had demanded. Only days later, the Soviet Union issued a proposal for a "one-year nuclear moratorium" in *Pravda* under the name of Yuri Andropov.

At the final press conference, reported by the Italian press on Jan. 23, Brandt and Palme were "hit by a barrage of questions, many of them embarrassing," according to the *Corriere della Sera*. "The Roman weekend of Brandt and Palme, Moscow's friends, was a failure," wrote *Il Giornale*. Several journalists openly took up the issue of the Soviet links. Palme protested that "these rumors are spread by extreme right-wing groups." Asked about the U.S. beam-weapons defense strategy, Palme shouted, "We are against the space race," and asserted that such weapons would be against the 1972 ABM treaty (a lie cherished by Moscow—see page 61).

Palme restated the necessity of a one-year nuclear moratorium, and Arbatov specified that this included the Trident and MX missiles. It was at this point that former British Prime Minister Edward Heath, himself a Brandt Commission member, stood up and declared that he "publicly disagreed with such a proposal, which would guarantee Soviet military superiority." Later Heath, in a conversation with *EIR* Rome bureau chief Leonardo Servadio, explained that Arbatov had imposed his policies during the sessions with the support of Brandt and Palme. Heath stressed, "It is absurd that the Soviets tell us we should reduce armaments to feed the Third World when they have never done anything for the Third World and are the biggest exporters of weapons there."

Mr. Heath told *EIR* that many others saw things his way, deepening the split to the point that there was no agreement even on the date of the next meeting.

The press conference was abruptly shut down when a journalist from the anti-drug magazine *Guerra alla Droga* asked Palme, "Your policy is very similar to Neville Chamberlain's in 1938—do you expect to be more successful than he was?"

and besides, the question is nonsense!"

Parliamentary question in Italy

It had already been clear from the outset that the conference would not be peaceful. After a hailstorm of political statements, newspaper articles, and radio and television reports in the days before the gathering, the equation "Brandt and Palme work for the KGB" had become virtually a household word in Italy. On Jan. 17 Vincenzo Carollo, the vice-president of the Senate delegation of the Christian Democracy (DC), Italy's largest party, had submitted a formal parliamentary query to Prime Minister Bettino Craxi (see *EIR*, Jan. 31). The query was reported on every national newscast and reprinted in the DC newspaper.

On Jan. 20 the Milan newspaper *Il Giornale* interviewed Senator Carollo in a front-page article headlined, "Pro-Moscow Pacifist Brandt Speaks about Disarmament in Rome, in the Presence of a KGB Man; Among the Participants Will Also Be Arbatov Who, According to Christian Democrat Carollo, Is the Long Arm of Andropov." *Il Giornale* wrote, "A disturbing prologue to the Rome Socialist International meeting has been a parliamentary question addressed to Craxi. . . . Senator Carollo told us that General Milshtein is a Swede with a Soviet heart, while Arbatov is the long arm of Andropov in the Soviet secret services." Asked by the reporter, "Don't you think your worries are exaggerated?" Carollo answered, "No, because there is an attempt to pollute the Socialist International with the aim of favoring a compromise in the West similar to the Popular Fronts of the 1930s."

Fuel was tossed on the fire by Longo, general-secretary of the Italian Socialist Democratic Party, one of the two member-parties of the Socialist International in Italy along with Premier Craxi's Socialist Party. Unlike Craxi, Longo refused to participate in the meeting and on Jan. 21 put out in his party's organ, *L'Umanità*, a statement confirming the ongoing split inside the Socialist International and the fact that Brandt-Palme's foes are on the warpath. Longo stressed that the two commissions are not part of the International but "independent."

"I thus have no reason to participate in the meeting," his statement reads, "and also wish to stress the distance and criticism of the Italian Social Democrats vis-à-vis such ambiguous and confused political operations that do not favor resumption of the East-West dialogue. . . . I am convinced that until such time as a strong Atlantic solidarity is recreated in Europe, the Soviet government will tend to maintain a hard line on rearmament, and even more to feed divisions and splits inside the Western alliance with the aim of changing the continental equilibrium that has guaranteed a long period of coexistence with conflicts, and relative tranquility in inter-

European relationships. Thus I consider it a mistake to favor the unilateral pacifist and neutralist movements. This is a policy that cannot be reconciled with the clear-cut loyalty to Europe and the Atlantic alliance of the Italian Social Democracy."

After a weak defense from the Socialist Party, the president of the parliamentary Interior Committee, Social Democrat Luigi Preti, took up the cudgels even more fiercely. "We Social Democrats are not a bit interested in the words of the Brandt-Palme commissions, which limit themselves to deploring Western missiles and encouraging pacifist propaganda in the West without adequately confronting the Soviets for their military policy and thus, in this way, playing into the hands of Moscow."

The head of the British Social Democratic Party, David Owen, next gave an interview to *Il Giornale*. Asked if it is true that "there is a major infiltration of Soviet spies inside the Socialist International," Owen, whose party split from the Labour Party, said, "I have no concrete evidence, but I can tell you that the Labour Party is favoring the political escalation of individuals that up to 15 years ago wouldn't have gotten the party card for their political position." Is the case the same for the SPD? "I don't know and I don't want to know. The SPD has chosen a half-way position, but one cannot attack Reagan's policy, Reagan represents the United States. . . . This 'appeasement,' typical also of the British Labourites, is extremely dangerous because it plays into the hands of Moscow."

Finally, the story also erupted in Germany, in Brandt's own SPD. On Jan. 19 the most influential German daily, *Die Welt*, reported the statement of a well-known SPD member, Hans Josef Horchem, the former head of the secret service office in Hamburg, attacking Brandt for having brought the Socialist International "into Moscow's magnetic field." "The Socialist International has become, under the leadership of Brandt, a forum for pro-Soviet policy initiatives. . . . Anti-Americanism is now the leading impulse in the organization, and part of its program is the negation and rejection of every value uniting the United States with Western Europe. It is considered a crime to reject the idea of Soviet military superiority in Europe."

The scandal grew to the point that Brandt was forced to reply. In an interview with *Der Spiegel* he accused U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Jeane Kirkpatrick of having leaked the documents on the secret Socialist International meeting in Managua. Brandt said, "It was a non-paper spread by Kirkpatrick. . . . note I didn't say CIA." He accused Italian Socialist parliamentarian Carlo Ripa di Meana, who spearheaded exposing the Managua meeting, of talking "like Strauss," the German conservative politician. Brandt did not comment on Italian press reports that he spent much of his "off-duty" time in Rome with Enrico Berlinguer, the secretary general of the Italian Communist Party. "I am often invited to lunch by friends," he said, "but this has nothing to do with my official meetings."