

## Report from Italy by Umberto Pascali

### What Andreotti did in Moscow

*"We can turn you to ashes," says Gromyko, and the Italian foreign minister has no response but to appease.*

**R**emember Pompeii, reduced to ashes by a volcano! How many Vesuvii are contained in a thermonuclear bomb?" This statement was addressed to Giulio Andreotti in Moscow on April 23 by his Soviet colleague Andrei Gromyko during a toast in honor of the Italian foreign minister, the first high-level representative of a NATO country to visit Moscow after the installation of the Euromissiles. Pompeii is the town near Naples that was destroyed by a volcanic eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 79 A.D., a tragedy traditionally cited to epitomize the fall of the Roman Empire.

Gromyko's intent in making such an unprecedented public threat was clear: to brutally intimidate the forces Andreotti represents, i.e., the Italian "black" (pre-19th century) nobility and its assets within the Vatican leadership. It did not cross Andreotti's mind to respond to the Soviets' threats, pressures, and blackmail in any way but to appease, appease, and again appease. He went so far as to agree to sign a joint document with the Soviet leaders denouncing beam weapons: "The two sides," read the document, "agree on the necessity that the disarmament conference faces, the concrete analysis of the prevention of an arms race in outer space."

The foreign minister is uttering the first lines of a script outlined a long time ago by the top-level European oligarchic strategists, and polished up in detail by Henry Kissinger and his business partner, incoming NATO Secretary-General Lord Carrington.

Andreotti will be followed to Moscow by West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher and his British counterpart, Geoffrey Howe. Andreotti himself, as some observers noted privately, is dominated by the idea of becoming a sort of Italian satrap with Moscow's support. His immediate aim is to obtain the Italian presidency next year. He already has the support of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and a large part of his own party, the Christian Democracy, which is in a coalition government with the Socialists and other small parties.

Andreotti was treated by the Soviet leaders not as a foreign minister, but as a head of state, the Italian press underlined. Gromyko came to the airport to welcome him; the talks took place in the famous "Catherine the Great" room, the first time this has happened to a foreign minister. Above all, Andreotti was able to meet at length with Konstantin Chernenko, who, as Andreotti reported to the journalists, formulated "new ideas" for restarting the peace talks. This mystical phrase now dominates foreign-policy debate in Italy, and elsewhere. The U.S. State Department issued a statement underlining its interest in the "new ideas," and suggesting that these can be discussed in Geneva.

The question around which the whole visit centered was of course European "decoupling" from the United States. "What concretely do the Soviets want from the Europeans?" Andreotti was asked on his return from Moscow. "The Soviet Union," he re-

plied, "would like to have a European interlocutor with a certain independent capability of judgment" vis-à-vis the United States. But the problem is in Washington: "I do not think that the Americans could lightly consider the issue of an independent defense of Europe." In all the talks Gromyko stressed that the "poor Europeans" are the victims.

*La Stampa*, the daily of Trilateralite Gianni Agnelli, wrote: "It seems that the Soviet foreign minister wanted to save the Europeans from their own mistakes, inviting them to react to the overbearing actions imposed on them by the big boss of the alliance."

To put the pro-Soviet shift on a solid basis, Andreotti arranged to link Italy's economy very tightly to Moscow. He signed \$3 billion worth of economic deals with the U.S.S.R., including several medium-term cooperation accords (until 1994), which make Italian industry more and more strategically dependent on Soviet raw materials. Economic relations with Moscow had been frozen, officially at least, after the Euromissiles decision. Now the question of Italian involvement in building the Siberian pipeline is completely unblocked.

Protests erupted inside the government. The vice-secretary of the Social Democratic party, Ruggero Puletti, stated: "It is time to say with the utmost clarity and firmness that the foreign policy of Andreotti does not correspond to the foreign policy of the government. I hope Andreotti was in Moscow only as a journalist." Immediately, not only the opposition PCI but the entire leadership of the Christian Democracy threw themselves into a defense of Andreotti and his policy. Prime Minister Bettino Craxi not only refused to differentiate his position from that of Andreotti, but announced that he has accepted an invitation to visit East Berlin.