

Report from Italy by Liliana Gorini

Communists caught 'red handed'

It used to be that only the Christian Democrats were tainted by investigations into the mafia—but no longer.

'Red administration, yes, but red of shame," was the comment of a Christian Democratic councilman in Piacenza after the arrest of Giovanni Ambroggi. Ambroggi is a Communist, the town's planning chief, and the first Communist alderman ever arrested in the history of Communist and left-coalition regional administrations in Italy.

The Communist councillor for town planning was arrested for "private interests in official proceedings," in particular, issuing patents in an irregular fashion. Three former colleagues of his were arrested some days earlier in Modena, having done too many favors for a Communist real-estate company when they were administrators.

As a result, a political crisis has struck Piacenza, threatening all left administrations in the "red belt" of Emilia Romagna. Until now, all scandals relating to the mafia have posed a threat to the Christian Democratic Party, in the main, with the Communist Party cheering the investigations on from the sidelines in self-confident purity. Is the so-called "party of the clean hands" not so clean as it pretended to be all these years?

The Italian Communist Party is at the center of scandals concerning not only administrative irregularities, but also political connections to the Sicilian and Calabrian mafia. That it functions secretly, as if it were a "mafia," is to be expected. One only need consider the Communists' Bulgarian and Soviet connections which necessarily

have to be hidden. That the Bulgarians, under Soviet supervision, are involved in criminality in the West in connection with local mafias is well established. But that the Communists of Italy have been involved in plain mafia criminal activities has only now been established.

The president of the Italian parliament's Anti-Mafia Commission, the Communist parliamentarian Alinovi, has been accused by his colleagues inside the commission of having suppressed a list of 21 Calabrian administrators linked to the 'ndrangheta, the infamous Calabrian mafia. Some of the administrators he covered for were Communists.

The list was sent to the Anti-Mafia Commission on April 12, 1983 by the prefect of police in Reggio Calabria. The scandal exploded when news of its existence, and its possession by the head of the commission, reached the press. For the first time, the Anti-Mafia Commission met to inquire of its own president, whose resignation has been demanded by the Christian Democratic Party.

Alinovi now stands accused not only of having covered up for his Communist colleagues in the Calabrian mafia, but also of having used his position as president of the commission to attack the political enemies of the Communist Party.

Another Communist leader whose appearance before the Anti-Mafia Commission has been requested by the Christian Democrats is the mayor of Rome Vetere, accused of having done

many favors for a mafioso land-owner in Tor Vergata, including aid in preventing the University of Rome from acquiring any of his land.

The Communist mayor reacted to the accusation by calling a press conference and reading a release extending full support to him from his left administration coalition (Communists, Socialists, Social-Democrats, and Republicans). When the journalists tried to pose some questions about the Tor Vergata case, he simply refused to answer, in what the press called "an act of scornful authoritarianism."

The arrest of the Sicilian mafioso Vito Ciancimino, former Christian Democratic mayor of Palermo, did not help the Communist Party to divert anybody's attention from these "red scandals." Another Sicilian mafiosi by the name of Salvo is under investigation in connection with Ciancimino. In line with a something known as the Cencelli manual—which takes its name from the parliamentarian who proposed that the various Italian economic porkbarrels should be divided up according to electoral percentages among the parties—Salvo actually declared that he was accordingly financing all parties, including the Communist Party.

Il Popolo, the organ of the Christian Democratic Party, which was the main target of mafia scandals until now, reminded its readers that not only was the secretary general of the Italian Communist Party, Alessandro Natta, a Fascist boss during the 20 years Mussolini was in power (the Ventennio), but that the Sicilian Communist parliamentarian Macaluso "has relations with some barons suspected of being mafiosi."

Rumors are circulating that if Ciancimino speaks, he will name some names linking the Communist Party to the mafia.