

Report from Italy by Renato Tosatto

Craxi sacrificed to 'New Yalta'

The longest government of the postwar period has collapsed in the wake of the Achille Lauro affair.

On October 17, at 12:30 p.m., Italian Premier Bettino Craxi submitted his resignation to President Francesco Cossiga, after a short cabinet meeting and an address before the parliament concerning his government's foreign policy and, of course, its behavior in the hijacking of the Italian oceanliner *Achille Lauro* earlier this month: releasing the accused mastermind, Abu Abbas.

The sudden crisis of Craxi's government was provoked by the decision of the Republican Party (PRI) to leave the five-party government coalition. Republican Ministers Giovanni Spadolini (Defense) and Bruno "Doge of Venice" Visentini (Finance) handed their resignations to the President a day earlier. Premier Craxi had a two-hour morning meeting with Spadolini on the *Achille Lauro* affair. Immediately afterward, the Republican executive committee met. Spadolini then read a party statement saying: "We can no longer support the government on foreign policy."

Craxi is not the only one now suffering, of course. A change in the political face of the entire Mediterranean area has occurred with incredible rapidity. In a very few days, between the Oct. 1 Israeli air raid on PLO headquarters in Tunis, and the *Achille Lauro* hijacking, the United States, through the U.S. State Department, has perhaps irretrievably compromised its relationships with Tunisia, Egypt, and Italy, its leading allies in the region.

Tunisian Premier M'zali met with

Premier Craxi on Oct. 16. They told the press, "The perspective for peace in the Middle East has disappeared." Soviet influence in the Middle East is now growing by leaps and bounds, not least through the special relationship secretly arranged between Jerusalem and Moscow as part of the global "New Yalta" in which the U.S. State Department is implicated.

Spadolini and Visentini were not alone. "New Yalta" politician Giulio Andreotti, Italy's Christian Democratic foreign minister, was very much a part of the clearly pre-planned Craxi fall.

Andreotti and his ministry covered up the fact of the killing of the American Leon Klinghoffer, hostage aboard the ship, long enough to permit the release of the four hijackers later intercepted by American jetfighters aboard an Egyptian Boeing 737. Andreotti also must be held accountable for Abbas's unhindered flight from Italian soil. When the first rumors of the murder of the American hostage were reported, Andreotti stated: "It is not confirmed. I think it is a war of nerves by the terrorists." A source at the foreign ministry told an *EIR* correspondent the same story.

Andreotti then joined with Secretary of State Shultz at the Brussels NATO meeting on Oct. 15, to sharpen the resulting "crisis in relations." Shultz emerged from their 30-minute meeting to declare: "We disagree, we have not composed our differences." Shultz then described Italian behavior in allowing the departure of Abu Ab-

bas and Rome's refusal to extradite the four terrorists as "incomprehensible." Andreotti commented; "We have our reasons for acting the way we did."

Immediately after the Abu Abbas incident, Spadolini disassociated himself from the government. Craxi was through.

Spontaneous, or a conspiracy?

In early September, Henry Kissinger visited Florence, for no apparent reason. Spadolini lives in Florence. The visit occurred immediately after Kissinger's meeting in Venice with the most prominent members of the Aspen Institute in Italy, a meeting on San Giorgio Maggiore island in Venice, in the Benedictine Monastery there, home of Visentini's own Cini Foundation. The discussion concerned the meaning of "New Yalta" for the Mediterranean.

Did that meeting take the decision to seize the next opportunity to topple the one government in Europe firmly in favor of the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative?

When Craxi addressed the parliament on the *Achille Lauro* affair, Communist leader Giorgio Napolitano praised Craxi, trying to seduce him into a Socialist-Communist "alternative" government, with or without direct Communist Party involvement. Andreotti's Christian Democracy, however, forced his resignation, and is now considering a takeover of the premiership with Communist support.

A number of solutions are possible: a four-party government without Spadolini's Republicans, or without Craxi's Socialists—or even new elections in the spring, a dangerous option because Italy could be left ungovernable in the meantime.

Any "solution" now available, however, may make Italy's commitment to the SDI, even the Western alliance itself, much weaker.