

Referenda steer Italy toward shoals

by Leonardo Servadio

On Nov. 9, Italian voters will have to decide on two different referenda which, if passed, could increase the instability in Italy's political institutions. The first would abrogate the country's current nuclear energy policy; the second would overhaul the current system of justice administration. In the case of the nuclear referendum, abolishing the nuclear energy program could subject Italy to manipulation of its Middle East oil supplies. The justice referendum would make Italy's legal system much more dependent on whatever political forces are in power at any given time.

According to the Italian Constitution, voter referenda are only to abrogate laws, and do not establish any new law or regulation. The nuclear energy referendum would halt the construction of new nuclear plants, and end Italy's participation in foreign nuclear energy projects. With the justice administration referendum, citizens would vote "yes" to end immunity for judges who make mistakes in condemning someone unjustly; and to end the institution of the parliamentary commission of inquiry, which decides whether or not a parliamentarian accused of some criminal act can be tried in a court.

Should these referenda succeed, it is not clear what might replace the existing laws. What is clear, is that the referenda, particularly the one on nuclear energy, are designed to appeal to "public opinion." Fifteen years of anti-nuclear propaganda saturating the media, capped by the Chernobyl incident, have fed the people the idea that they can eliminate the danger of a nuclear meltdown, by canceling nuclear energy production in Italy.

Technically, were the existing nuclear energy plan to be abolished, a new plan could be drawn up for Italy to build hundreds of nuclear power stations, though maybe with different characteristics. For that reason, the Christian Democracy (DC), Italy's largest party, has decided to follow the tide of popular opinion, and come out for abrogating the current nuclear policy.

The reason appears to be the manipulation of the nominally pro-nuclear DC by the forces of Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti, who dangled the possibility that changes could be made in nuclear policy after the referendum passes. Thus, Andreotti's people lined up all the forces within the DC to accept the anti-nuclear line.

Practically all the parties have indicated they will follow

suit. And the small Liberal and Republican parties, which support a vote in favor of nuclear energy, have no plans to develop Italy's industrial capacity.

In fact, the only serious opposition to the referendum has been the Schiller Institute, which has started a campaign against the referendum, including a poster calling on citizens to vote "no" on the abolition of nuclear energy, and to revive the tradition of Enrico Mattei, the man who, in 1956, built the first nuclear power plant operating on the European continent, and had plans to increasingly nuclearize energy production in Italy. After Mattei's mysterious death in 1962—often attributed to "Seven Sisters" oil multinationals' money—no new plans for power plants were drawn up in Italy.

And, except for the Schiller Institute and the collaborating movement of the Patriots for Italy, there is no political force which intends to educate the citizens on the importance of nuclear energy.

The intention of those who have imposed this referendum, is to totally destroy any possibility for Italy to continue to develop as an independent nation. Instead, Italy would continue to be subject to blackmail over the flow of Middle East oil—which is increasingly under Soviet control.

The parties that pushed for the anti-nuclear referendum—the Communist Party (PCI) and its fellow travelers, the Radical and the Proletarian Democracy parties—have also been the most outspoken adversaries of the naval deployment in the Persian Gulf to allow safe passage of ships. And keep in mind that the largest supplier of oil to Italy is Iran.

The referendum was originally pushed by the vice secretary of the Socialist Party (PSI), Claudio Martelli, who got his marching orders at a Socialist International meeting directed by Willy Brandt that took place in West Germany shortly after the Chernobyl accident. The Soviets then started to push, through their networks in the West, the idea that nuclear power plants should be abolished. The Greenies and Brandt were the first to get into action.

Abuse of referendum

The absurdity of the situation can be seen in the fact that the institution of the referendum is designed to give the citizens a way to nullify laws passed by Parliament, that are not in their best interests. Thus it is not proper that the parties represented in Parliament should promote a referendum, because they should be debating the laws in the Parliament itself.

Thus, it would seem that those who organized the nuclear referendum want to avoid debating the issue in Parliament. The previous government of Socialist Bettino Craxi, created under the auspices of the U.S. networks associated with the Irangate scandal, was collapsed by the DC precisely to judo the referendum. Subsequently, the DC was compelled to accede to the referendum; if they did not, the PSI would have refused to join the new DC government, preventing the constitution of a parliamentary majority.