

of our forces.” As that announcement went out, FMLN squads blew up 15 power transmission lines, cutting electricity to 30% of the country, and halting television and radio transmissions for several hours.

Gen. Abdul Gutierrez, head of the national electrical company, called the attack “the worst span of sabotage” since the civil war began. It was the insurgents’ answer to a 15-day unilateral cease-fire declared by the government to begin Nov. 7. FMLN commanders announced that “the order has been given to attack, if the government’s troops enter zones controlled by our commandos.”

Flanking the enemy

The FMLN has gained such military advantage, in large part because of the United States’s insistence that the Salvadoran government channel all wealth produced in the country into foreign debt payments. The economy has collapsed. Fifty percent of El Salvador’s population is unemployed. Real income levels have dropped by between one-half and two-thirds since 1979. Inflation is at least 40% annually—and the FMLN has had a field day recruiting.

Without an economic strategy, the United States may soon find itself locked into Moscow’s box: either to accept the establishment of a new Nicaragua in El Salvador, or intervene directly to shore up a government hated because it has “turned people into a rabble” on U.S. orders.

The Soviets, of course, have no intention of carrying out the terms of the Andropov deal. Central America is the Soviet monkey-trap for the United States, the bait that is to pull U.S. troops out of Europe and the Gulf for a fight closer to home.

Just how Moscow plans to “respect” U.S. intervention to stop Soviet-backed insurgencies in Central America is foreshadowed in El Salvador. An editorial in the November 1986 issue of *América Latina*, the monthly publication of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences’ Latin America Institute, stated that, if the Reagan administration seeks to “democratize” the Nicaraguan regime, it can only do so by attempting to overthrow the Sandinistas. This will lead to a nationwide Vietnam.

“It is worth remembering the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, which pulled the U.S. into the Vietnam adventure. Won’t the same thing happen in Central America? The logic of the route adopted leads precisely to this. *Then, the war will extend beyond the limits of Nicaragua.* A lasting guerrilla force will be deployed in the jungle, in a territory which is equal to that of South Vietnam and with a population that is more or less equivalent [emphasis added].”

In May 1987, *América Latina* reviewed the situation in El Salvador, concluding that the Reagan administration’s “democratization” program has eliminated any political maneuvering room for the Duarte government. The crisis in El Salvador “makes very likely Philip Berryman’s forecast that: ‘The final role of Duarte in history could be that of inviting the U.S. to invade El Salvador, to “save a democracy” of his own making.’ ”

Nov. 8-9 Referendum

25 million Italians cast protest vote

by Liliana Celani

The lowest-ever voter turnout characterized the referendum on nuclear power and judicial issues which took place in Italy on Nov. 8 and 9. Only 65.2% of the voters went to the polls, compared to the 87.7% who voted in 1974 at the first big referendum on divorce, and the 77.9% who voted on the cost-of-living escalator in 1985. Moreover, 4 million of the voters who did go to the polls wrote only insults and angry words on the ballot, indicating a wave of rage toward the parties and government institutions, which has much more to do with their impotence in the face of the financial crash than with nuclear energy and the court system.

One week before the vote on the referendum, the government of Christian Democrat Giovanni Goria discussed doubling the budget cuts foreseen by the Italian “Gramm-Rudman bill,” the so-called “Finanziaria 1988,” as the only measure to deal with the financial crash. Despite the fact that almost all the Italian parties called for a “yes” vote on the referendum (the only exception being the Liberal and Republican parties, which together make up approximately 5% of the vote), many voters went to the polls to express their protest by voting contrary to what their party had asked them to do—either because they oppose the anti-nuclear and anti-industrial policy of the Greenies, or because they dislike the austerity economic policy of all the other parties.

The “yes” to abrogating existing laws on nuclear power and justice did win, but the “no” to abrogating nuclear power was much higher than expected (20% on Italian nuclear power plants and 27.8% on exporting nuclear power abroad, the highest counts, interestingly enough, in the municipalities which have nuclear power plants, such as Trino Vercellese, 33.9%, and Caorso, 30%). There, people have a less hysterical view of nuclear power; they have been living with it for many years.

The only ones campaigning for nuclear power in this referendum were the Schiller Institute and the Patriots for Italy, which put out a pro-nuclear power poster in major Italian cities drawing the attention of many citizens (who asked for copies, since it was the only optimistic poster) and, amazingly, even of the press. The weekly *L’Espresso* ran a picture of the poster, all by itself on the electoral board, and

the largest circulation Italian daily, *Corriere della Sera*, ran the full text of it on election day, Nov. 8, in an article on the posters of this campaign.

After describing the "horrible posters" put out by the ecologists and the World Wildlife Fund, showing, for example, a panda bear canceling a nuclear power plant, *Corriere* writes: "But there is also a curious poster signed Schiller Institute and Patriots for Italy, which appeared in various cities and says 'Italy needs nuclear power plants.' It shows Enrico Mattei as he 'lays the first stone of the nuclear power plant in Latina,' the one which is supposed to be deactivated because of its distance from Rome, and has a long text which deserves to be quoted in full: 'In order to get out of the economic crisis, for new infrastructures, for industry and agriculture, not to depend on Khomeini's oil, Italy has to build new nuclear power plants. Don't believe the ecologist propaganda orchestrated by the Soviet KGB, which wants a weak and indefensible Europe. Nuclear power plants are dangerous only in the Soviet Union. Every citizen has the duty to move to make sure that Italy becomes, by the year 2000, that economic superpower for which great patriots such as Cavour and Mattei fought.' Where does this cold war propaganda come from?" is the comment of *Corriere*.

Chernobyl effect

The "Chernobyl effect" was stronger than patriotic feelings, due also to a scare campaign in the press and TV, and to the lack of any technical information on nuclear power. Even more, rage against the institutions prevailed. The practical implications of the referendum are as follows: The Parliament and government have four months, according to the Italian Constitution, to promote and approve new bills replacing the five which have been abrogated by the popular vote.

For the issue of justice, this means that from now on judges can go to jail if they issue wrong verdicts, which will "push them to condemn many fewer" innocent people, and also fewer criminals.

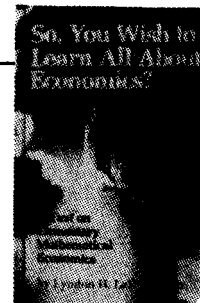
For the issue of nuclear power this means that a new National Energy Plan will have to be defined. Two lines are already emerging: the "fundamentalist" line of the Green, Radical, Demoproletarian, and Communist Parties, which demand that the government "immediately shut down all nuclear power plants" and industries, creating major worries in industries of that sector, such as Ansaldo in Genoa; and the "pragmatic" line of the Socialists and Christian Democrats, who also pushed for the "yes," but would be "satisfied" with a moratorium on building new plants, and keeping the three already existing (Trino Vercellese, Caorso, and Montalto di Castro, the latter under construction).

It should be remembered that these three plants have not been in operation for the past two years, because of Chernobyl, creating a situation in which Italy imports four-fifths of its energy, much of it from nuclear power plants in France! Which of the two lines will prevail will also depend on Mr.

Gorbachov, who has been pushing for a closer alliance between the Green, Communist, and Socialist Parties in Italy. The first effect of Gorbachov's "Comintern" speech at the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution (attended by Alessandro Natta for the Communist Party and Claudio Martelli, ex-Premier Craxi's top lieutenant, for the Socialist Party) was that suddenly the Italian Socialist Party started to praise the Communist Party, and to threaten a renewed government crisis.

"This avalanche of 'yes' votes," gloated the would-be "Duce," Bettino Craxi, "is due to the commitment of the parties which promoted the referendum and that of a great part of the Communist Party," while "the same cannot be said for the Christian Democracy." Another Craxi man in the Socialist Party, Venice-based former Industry Minister Giovanni De Michelis, gave an interview to the Communist daily *Unità* the day after the October Revolution meeting in Moscow, demanding that the Italian government "consult" the Italian Communist Party on the question of the "Finanziaria" budget-cuts bill being discussed, and of the proposal to reduce the right to strike, proposed by Premier Gorla.

The wave of wildcat strikes and the threat of a general strike from the trade unions indicate how such a "Comintern" alliance might evolve in the next weeks, in the midst of the financial and energy chaos. Many observers say that Gorla's government will not survive for long after the referendum.



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