

Report from Rome by Galliano Maria Speri

The descent to post-industrial hell

The well-funded Greenie movement started by killing nuclear power, and now has its sights on all forms of production.

Italy has become a test-case for the hell of post-industrial society. For the first time an industrialized country has abandoned nuclear power to resort to older, more polluting forms of energy production. The problem is not only with nuclear power, but with the fact that after the victory on that issue a powerful and well-financed Greenie movement has been launched against every productive sector, both industrial and agricultural, so that Italy might be the first advanced country to join the ranks of the Third World.

The latest round of attacks began in spring 1988, with a referendum that posed to Italian citizens the phony question of who should decide on the location of new nuclear plants, forbade Italy to join any international consortium building nuclear plants, and forbade the building of new nuclear plants. Under mass media bombardment that used the hysteria over Chernobyl, the anti-nuclear forces won the referendum. This was used by the government, made up of nominally pro-nuclear parties, to declare a "meditation period" that ended in a banning of any nuclear plant.

Of course, the referendum was a simple cover for a plan to deindustrialize the country and mask it as the "will of the people." Very few people realized what it was all about, and never imagined that it was to be used to ban not only all new plants, but also to close down the existing ones. With this excuse, a very modern nuclear plant in Caorso, in northern Italy, was shut down together with an older plant near Turin, while the building of another nuclear plant that was almost

completed in Montalto di Castro, 100 km north of Rome, was stopped. The government has decided that this plant is to be "re-converted" to be able to use oil, gas, and coal. This maneuver has already cost Italian taxpayers \$20 billion, because all the energy that had been produced by the functioning nuclear plants is now being bought from France, while the "restructuring" of the Montalto plant is an uneconomical engineering folly.

Since the referendum a fistful of Greenies has been elected to the Italian parliament and the so-called environment minister, Socialist Party member Giorgio Ruffolo, has become a kind of energy czar. The result of this is a series of blackouts for industry, because, while the electricity need grows by around 7% per year, the increase that ENEL, the Italian power authority, can afford is around 2-3%. On top of this, Italy gets 80% of her energy needs from abroad (Libyan and Iranian oil, Soviet gas, etc.), while she imports almost 20% of her electricity, mainly from France, but also from Switzerland and Yugoslavia.

It is obvious that no country in this condition can have an independent industrial policy. Gorbachov's Soviet Union can dictate political and economic guidelines to Italy, directly or through its client-states. In February, the huge state-owned complex Ansaldo and the Turin firm Fata signed an agreement with the Soviet energy minister to supply electricity to Italy for 15 years.

The second round of destabilizations started last summer, with an "accident"—according to several ex-

perts, totally fabricated—at the chemical factory Farmoplast, which spread some sulphuric gas in the atmosphere. Even though there never was any danger to people or the environment, on the basis of the media-hyped hysteria, Minister Ruffolo decided to close down the plant. In this way, the entire chemical industry has been put under attack and the stage has been set to hit any industrial sector that would oppose deindustrialization, because the anti-technology witchhunt could wipe out any opposition.

After the incredible success of the previous campaigns, the Greenies have been turned loose on the plastic industry, now targeted as the main culprit for pollution. Environment Minister Ruffolo has issued an incredible bill that puts a tax of 100 liras on any plastic shopping bag sold (i.e., 50 times the value of the bag itself) and forces all the producers to deposit the income of a entire month if they want to continue operating. Since most of the producers are small firms, not very well organized, the bill will simply bankrupt them. For the moment, the tax has been blocked by a court order, but we cannot exclude that a similar bill will soon pass.

The Green attack on Italian productive structures is not limited to industry. Last October, the Green Party picketed big meat shops in Rome to protest modern cattle-raising, calling for letting the cows free to graze in open pastures. Professor Massi, one of the top meat experts in Italy, calculated that if the Green Party proposal passed it would quintuple the price of meat, making it a luxury for the very rich.

The latest move of the Italian malthusians to drive farming back to the Dark Age, is a ban against all herbicides, with the excuse that they pollute drinking water.