

Bringing Italy into the new Europe

by Giuliana Sammartino

"I am a nuclear engineer who just got my degree from the Turin Polytechnic, and I am forced to work in marketing. All of my classmates are in the same situation. We in Italy risk ending up without the skilled cadres, without the 'brains' we need for the technological challenges which Europe is posing to us. Will we become like Russia? Pretty soon, will we have to import specialized technicians from abroad?" This question was put to Pierfranco Faletti, a member of the board of directors of the Italian national power company ENEL, during the conference, "Italy and the Infrastructural Development of Europe," organized in Milan by the Schiller Institute on Nov. 12.

The audience peppered the speakers with questions and comments, all prompted by faith in science and technology, and distrust and anger toward the politicians who have let Italy abandon nuclear power and are not buckling down to meet the nation's great infrastructural needs. Coverage of the meeting was aired over television channel TG3 in Lombardy. A wire story was run by the financial daily *Il Sole 24 Ore*, and an excellent report appeared in the daily *Avvenire*.

Marco Fanini, vice president of the Schiller Institute, said in his keynote that, thanks to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany, new tasks can be defined for the Europe of '92: "Thinking back on the debate which unfolded in recent years, Europe '92 was being configured exclusively as a fusion between banks, insurance companies, and financial empires. Today instead, the emphasis has been shifted to the need to free our whole productive potential to rebuild the economies of East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. . . ."

"Transportation routes and infrastructure are the key elements in the Schiller Institute proposal to create a Productive Triangle in the heart of Europe, a proposal developed by the American economist Lyndon LaRouche, who is so disliked by the U.S. government that it has found no better way than to imprison him for alleged financial crimes." Fanini pointed to the favorable moment for Europe, which could become the "world's locomotive" now that the American economy is grinding to a halt, the U.S.S.R. sinks into the abyss, and the Third World cannot rise out of its underdevelopment.

"LaRouche's European Productive Triangle proposal aims to reinforce, with further rail transport infrastructure,

the areas with the highest skills and industrial, intellectual, and productive density. This triangle runs to the north from the area around Paris, via the Ruhr region to Berlin, and from there to Vienna. Thus the main lines of passenger and freight traffic would shift from North-South to East-West. Off this triangle would branch the various corridors of development, including the southward spiral arm to Italy."

Engineer Pierfranco Faletti, a well-known advocate of nuclear energy, started his speech by scoring Italy's energy "vulnerability." "Unlike Japan which from 1973 to the present has cut its dependency on imported oil from 80% to 60%, by developing its own nuclear plants, Italy has increased its dependency on foreign crude from 67% to 81%." Yet, the ENEL official revealed, Italy's per capita electrical energy consumption is one of the lowest among industrialized nations, at three-quarters of the U.K.'s, two-thirds of Japan's, and only one-third that of the United States.

As if it were not enough to block future nuclear plants in Italy, Faletti said, the anti-nuclear lobby "wanted to become the hyper-first in the class to get drastically out of nuclear, by renouncing even the important nuclear garrison which was made up of the Trino Caorso and Montalto power plants." By ENEL's figures, the shutdown of these plants cost ENEL 43 trillion liras (\$38 billion)—the present entire value of ENEL's holdings.

New tunnels through the Alps

Architect Marco Sartori, who is in charge of the great projects office for the Lombardy region, remarked that "in Italy anyone who talked about high-speed travel was seen as a Martian, a visionary. Today it seems that with the second commissioning of the State Railways, high-speed systems have come back into their own, but we still must free ourselves of the Roman, provincial approach to problems which waits for the tunnels—the basis of our integration into Europe—to be built by others!"

All the tunnels which pass through the Alps were conceived and built in the second half of the last century. This year's freight volume carried beyond the Alps was some 100 million tons. Within a bit more than a decade, this figure is expected to double. Now, after the East bloc revolutions, we have to add to these projections the greater volume of traffic deriving from exchange with the East—which could grow to 50 million tons per year, Sartori said.

In the postwar years we built roads, but these are now overtaxed. Currently 65% of freight is carried in trucks, and only 35% by rail. Obviously we must increase rail traffic. We must build at least one or two new rail tunnels, and build them to last, with the same foresight our forefathers had. So they should not be too small, but big enough to let the new containers through, which get bigger all the time. Larger tunnels are desirable too, because the bigger the dimensions, the greater the chance of using them for "high-speed" passenger transit.