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## Italy

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# Kremlin is guiding the labor upheavals

by Umberto Pascali

Italy has been hit by a wave of "spontaneous" strikes launched by the Italian Communist Party (PCI). The official pretext is the government's decision to partially cut the Cost of Living Escalator (COL), which the cabinet voted up Feb. 14. This cut is obviously a blow against Italian labor, the outcome of pressure by the International Monetary Fund which has sent its agents to Rome for years, especially Sir Alan Whittome, demanding that the COL be cut and making every kind of threat. But this is not why the PCI leadership and party secretary Enrico Berlinguer gave the order to strike.

### The PCI's aspirations

The PCI has nothing against IMF austerity. It endorsed the program for destroying national industry and wages known as the Visentini Plan and even the "austerity culture" known as the post-industrial society. Now the same leadership that sold austerity as a revolutionary creed "against the ruling class" is demagogically declaring that it will do anything to block the decree.

Berlinguer announced Feb. 21 to his party's Central Committee that the PCI is ready to collapse the government of Socialist Prime Minister Bettino Craxi over this issue. But it was the Communist trade-union leader Luciano Lama who declared, "We are ready to give up even more," if the sacrifices were more fairly distributed. That means, if the PCI were allowed to be part of the decision making, i.e., to join the government in some way.

According to sources here in Rome, the Communist-controlled leaders of the CGIL confederation have concluded a secret deal with the faction of Italian industrialists linked to the Kissinger crowd in the United States. To do what? To create the conditions for a new form of "historical compromise" government based on a more or less explicit alliance between the PCI and the faction of pro-Soviet foreign minister Giulio Andreotti, whose Christian Democratic Party is Italy's largest.

The decision of the Communist majority of the CGIL to go for a near insurrection nationwide has provoked a split in the labor movement. The other unions and the non-Communist part of the CGIL accuse the Communists of cynically using workers' discontent, knowing that violent actions will only lead to defeat—but a defeat that could pave the PCI's

way into the government.

Extremist and pro-terrorist networks in the unions have been reactivated and heavily financed to create maximum chaos. The "Proletarian Democracy" of Mario Capanna, the former Maoist leader of the early-1970s Milan student revolt, has deployed its forces, calling for a frontal attack against the government and industrialists. The use of force is escalating, including the blockade of the transportation sector, services, and factories. Violent revolts are erupting in Naples and spreading in the South, a situation parallel to France.

But Berlinguer, between one rabble-rousing speech and the next, looks confidently to Carlo De Benedetti, the head of Olivetti and intimate friend of Kissinger. De Benedetti came out against the government's decision and stated several times in the PCI paper *Unità* that the PCI is "ripe" to govern. It is only apparently ironic that just at the moment when "industrialist" De Benedetti makes his support of the PCI public, Berlinguer's links with Moscow have been officially re-established after years of so-called Eurocommunism. Not since the days of Stalin has the PCI so energetically supported a Soviet "peace initiative."

### A deal with the Christian Democrats?

Berlinguer has an eye on the next national congress of the Christian Democracy (DC) in Rome Feb. 24-29. He has offered the DC what he calls an "institutional" alliance, and is doing everything possible to confront the DC congress with a *fait accompli* along the line: "See, nobody can govern without or against the PCI." Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti's various stooges ("he will be the real victor of the Congress" according to his top aide) are playing this Italian farce with high professionalism. "The DC formally supports the government," wrote the daily *La Repubblica* Feb. 23, "but the speech of Berlinguer was considered with great attention, and Rognoni [head of the DC parliamentary group] is very open to Berlinguer's position."

A very reliable source told *EIR* that on Feb. 23 a semi-secret meeting took place in Rome between PCI leader Gerardo Chiaromonte and 10 Christian Democratic parliamentarians, including a minister, to discuss possible convergences.

The real issue is foreign policy, and there is nothing the PCI would not be ready for, including cutting the COL, if it would help push Italy toward a Finland-like "neutrality" under Moscow's wing. That is the content of the impending "deal" with Andreotti, who is riding high since the withdrawal of the multinational troops from Lebanon.

The cagey foreign minister, who went to Andropov's funeral and met with Moscow's leadership, declared afterward that Italy must once again become the front-line country for détente. Andreotti went so far as to call in the U.S. ambassador in Rome the third week of February to protest the shelling by U.S. ships off Beirut of the positions of Moscow's Druze allies.