

Italy's Craxi opens the way for Communist role in government

by Vivian Freyre Zoakos

The doors of the Italian government have been, for the first time since 1948, flung open to the Communists and, through them, to Moscow.

In the most narrow terms, some might be tempted to see this as the logical result of the June 17 European Parliament elections, in which the Italian Communist Party for the first time (narrowly) outpolled all other parties, while Prime Minister Bettino Craxi's Socialists suffered a heavy defeat. But the truth of the matter is that those election results were contrived. They were then cynically used to push through a policy which had been prepared beforehand.

The public "permission" from the United States for some form of alliance with the Communists was given, almost predictably, by Henry Kissinger, who was touring Europe in the post-election period. It was appropriate that Kissinger was the one to give this okay, given his role as preeminent spokesman for a decoupling of Western Europe from the United States. He publicly assumed this ignominious position with his March 5 *Time* magazine article urging a withdrawal of one third of the American troops from European soil. During his June 23-25 Italy stopover, Kissinger made the declaration that "the Communist electoral victory must not be considered to be a problem."

In previous elections, the United States mobilized both overtly and covertly when there was even a whisper of a threat that the Communists might gain significant votes. Kissinger's complacent statement is not only a dramatic departure from the norm but an unmistakable signal. It has certainly been viewed as such by those factions among the parties traditionally and still today committed to a pro-American policy. Such people have, literally, found themselves left out in the cold by the United States, and all their avenues of American support suddenly and inexplicably withdrawn.

Pro-Communist Christian Democrats

On the Italian side, the secretary of the erstwhile largest party, the Christian Democracy, made a point of handing over to the Communists additional votes—and thus preparing the situation that exists today—by running an election campaign in which the Communist question was not addressed. Ciriaco De Mita, along with most of the other leaders of the majority, instead did the utmost to help the "sympathy vote" for the Communists by providing the population with emo-

tional displays at the funeral of Enrico Berlinguer, the Communist chief who died unexpectedly just prior to the balloting.

The day after the votes were in, De Mita made everything explicit by announcing loudly on the front pages of the press that henceforward only two conceivable forms of government coalitions could exist in Italy: one based on either the Christian Democrats or the Communists. The deal was on.

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As a result, for example, the head of the Italian Republican Party, stalking horse for, and allies of, the pro-Communist Christian Democrats, held talks with the general secretary of the Communist Party this week to discuss forming government coalitions between the majority and the Communists at the local level. Following those talks, in an interview with *Corriere della Sera* on August 2, new Communist chief Alessandro Natta noted that "of course" there is a "jump" into the Communist camp on the part of the majority.

Prime Minister Craxi is being allowed to remain the figurehead head of government only to the extent that he acts as the enforcer for the anti-American coalition which is now actually ruling behind the scenes. This poses little problem for Craxi, who has always sold himself to the highest bidder.

Pilgrimages to Moscow

The above is actually a description of the alliance which has been forged, in more precise terms, between the Soviet Union and the ruling Italian oligarchical families and their networks who in fact dictate the policies of the political

parties. The twin policy poles of the alliance are an agreement for converting Italy into a post-industrial society on the one hand, and decoupling from the United States on the other.

Hence a pilgrimage of the Italian financial oligarchy to Moscow has been under way for the past few weeks. To cite only the most important such visits in the span of mere weeks:

- Gianni Agnelli, owner of Fiat and representative of the cream of the Italian financial oligarchy, signed a contract with the Soviets last month in Moscow whose value is reported to be double that of the famous Togliattigrad, the city built by Italians for the Soviets.

- The minister of the Merchant Marine, Capria, returned from the U.S.S.R. with an agreement to repair Soviet ships in Italian ports. This will afford the bankrupt Italian shipyards with desperately needed contracts, and thereby further shifts in alliance loyalties.

- Engineer Schimberni, in Moscow representing the Montedison industrial giant, signed deals for the construction of chemical plants in the U.S.S.R.

- Of particular significance, a new institution is being created in the northern industrial center of Turin (Agnelli's homestead) to open up the Soviet market to small- and medium-sized industries, a sector which had previously been given no access to the East.

Communist unions negotiate austerity

On the domestic financial front, one of the signs of the Italo-Communist deal was the result of the meeting held in Rome on July 26 between the leadership of the three national trade union confederations and the industrialists' association, Confindustria. By far the largest trade union confederation is the Communist Party-owned CGIL.

For the first time in years, the trade union leadership sat at a table with Confindustria. What they negotiated, to the subsequent enthusiastic exclamations of the CGIL leadership, was the beginning of the bruising austerity package first proposed by Republican Party president and Fiat's long-time general manager Bruno Visentini. The core of that package, recently outlined again in Moscow by Olivetti chairman Carlo De Benedetti, is the forced extreme rationalization of the heavy industry sector, to be replaced by a post-industrial teletronic-oriented economy.

Carlo De Benedetti has also been the man who has most consistently over the past year demanded the dropping of traditional anti-Communist pressures so the latter could openly enter the government. Hardly a day has since passed that he is not appreciatively quoted by the Communist daily, *L'Unità*. De Benedetti is also the individual who, in an interview with the *Executive Intelligence Review*, forecast and welcomed a global financial collapse as a precondition for instituting a reorganized world order on the post-industrial model. Although he neglected at the time to spell out the implications for the Atlantic Alliance in the case of such a Western financial debacle, the Soviets clearly have seized the implied possibilities.

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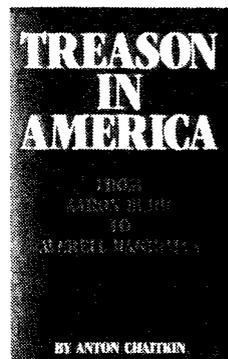


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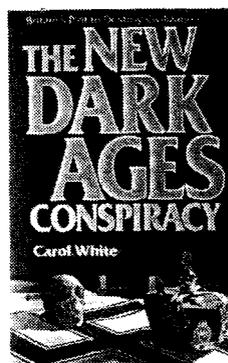


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