

How The PCI Maneuvered A Crisis In Italy

On Jan. 31, acting Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti announced the sudden cancellation of the week's scheduled negotiations between himself and Italy's major political parties, negotiations which were to study Andreotti's newly formulated economic program as the basis for creating a new government.

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Andreotti's announcement, made in a succinct statement to the press, represented an admission that with the Communist Party's (PCI) refusal to drop its position of demanding government participation as the only question worth negotiating, all discussion of program was thereby rendered meaningless. Therefore, all meetings with the PCI and the smaller Socialist and Republican Parties were halted until the Feb. 3 meeting of the ruling Christian Democratic Party (DC) directorate, where Andreotti appealed to his party to reverse its opposition to the Communists as government partners. Acceptance of Andreotti's appeal would have broken the current deadlock and created the possibility for discussion of economic program and the formation of a new cabinet.

As predicted, however, Andreotti did not receive the support of his party on Feb. 3. The DC directorate split down the middle, with the centrist Dorothean wing finding itself on the same side of the fence as its erstwhile factional enemies on the "right" under Senator Massimo De Carolis, in opposing Andreotti's plea for a quick solution to the PCI question.

As a result of the failure of the Christian Democracy to give Andreotti a mandate for negotiation with the Communists, a number of options have now opened — all of which feed the controlled environment generated by the PCI's sudden and insistent demands for government participation. Included are the following, most publicized scenarios:

(1) A government of so-called apolitical technocrats to rule the country until the scheduled general election of 1979. Such a government would most likely be led by a politician more pliable than Andreotti to the slave-labor, economic austerity demands of the International Monetary Fund. Among the probably candidates are Amintore Fanfani of the Christian Democracy and long-time British agent Ugo La Malfa of the tiny Republican Party.

(2) Continued chaos, while the DC convenes its National Council and an extraordinary congress to settle the PCI issue. This would take weeks, thoroughly destabilizing the country, and would offer no solution. At the end of the congress, the first option could still be adopted, or...

(3) Early elections could be held. Elections would eliminate the smaller parties, leaving the PCI and DC still locked in confrontation. Depending on the election results, one party would form a government over the protests of the other. Either way, this is a civil war scenario with potential overtones of a coup such as occurred in Allende's Chile in 1973.

Why the PCI Shifted

The immediate responsibility for the current Italian impasse must be placed on the Communist Party. It was the PCI which in early January made a sudden about-turn and, in the words of U.S. journalist Claire Sterling, "changed overnight from Andreotti's friend and ally to his executioner." The background for this sudden shift, however, is generally covered up by journalists like Ms. Sterling who use the PCI's government maneuver to "prove" the Kissinger thesis that the European Communist parties are antidemocratic tools of the Soviet Union's foreign policy. The blame for the PCI's irresponsible behavior can not be placed on Moscow; instead, it must also be understood that it was the predictable result of a carefully prepared "inside-outside" operation carried out by readily identifiable British agents — some of whom go back at least two generations in a family-honored tradition of serving the British Crown and City of London financiers.

The accepted explanation for the PCI's decision to become "Andreotti's executioner" claims the party was demonstrably losing the support of its working-class base. Thus, Italian and American journalists cite the fact that the head of the CGIL trade union confederation, Communist Luciano Lama, was unable to prevent a call for a nationwide general strike demanded by the other, non-Communist forces in the trade-union movement as indicative of its loss of working class control. The loss of its base was said to stem from the PCI's programmatic agreement with Andreotti which began 17 months ago.

While it is true that Lama was unable to prevent the general strike call and similar demands for "radical" actions, this is not however an index of Communist popularity so much as it represents the sophisticated aversive environment successfully engineered by British agents-of-influence in the PCI leadership itself.

The operation consisted of three main components:

(1) At the trade union level, the Socialist Party leadership (typified by Giorgia Benvenuto, identified as a British puppet by the U.S. Labor Party since early 1974) was mobilized for a campaign portraying the Communists as "boot lickers" of the DC. The radical rhetoric of these Socialist trade unionists was echoed by the "extreme left" — which the PCI had correctly identified as fascist — *autonomi* movement which began to penetrate the factories and the smaller UIL national trade union confederation at the invitation of its national

secretary, Giorgio Benvenuto. The context for the entire operation was provided through daily waves of terrorist violence which generated a climate of chaos and desperation.

(2) At the same time the wing of the PCI leadership directed by second-generation British Giorgio Amendola and Giorgio Napolitano began mobilize the party for a break with Andreotti on the basis that the DC be given an ultimatum to *immediately* accept the PCI in the government. Napolitano and others fed the growing fear of the honest Communist leadership that they were losing mass support by pointing to the operations Benvenuto carried out at the trade union level.

(3) Even more revealing was old Action Party leader Giorgio La Malfa's sudden shift from adamant opposition to the PCI, to a vociferous public support for the PCI's democratic mission (after a "conversion" which took place during a trip to China). With the PCI's former rabid opponent now demanding that the Communists be allowed to participate in the government, the DC's resistance appeared to be a slap in the face to the party to which, after all, the DC owed its continued capacity to rule. Thus, the DC seemed to be keeping the PCI in a "brutta figura" posture.

When Henry Kissinger directly intervened into the growing turmoil together with U.S. Ambassador Richard Gardner, mobilizing the Carter Administration to *forbid* PCI participation in Italy's national government, the sophisticated manipulation of the PCI leadership was complete. The Napolitano-Amendola faction effectively took the driver's seat.

This became explicit during the keynote speech given by general-secretary Enrico Berlinguer at the PCI

Central Committee plenum of Jan. 27. Adopting the Napolitano-Amendola position, Berlinguer took an extreme hardline stance on the issue of the government, even positing the possibility of a "left alternative" government without the DC. Even more devastating to his former agreement with Andreotti, Berlinguer dropped his former support of capital-intensive industrial development to explain the need for PCI government participation by pointing out that only the Communists could enforce the needed levels of "very harsh austerity" and labor-intensive programs which Italy required.

At this point, it appears nearly certain that neither Andreotti nor any other DC leader opposed to economic austerity programs will form the next Italian government. It is equally probable that one of the scenarios outlined above will play itself out. However, the situation could of course be reversed, if the formerly hegemonic leadership of the PCI were to retake control of the party and cease the insistence on a government role at the expense of capital-intensive economic program. In part, this depends on developments outside of Italy. A move to break the political hold of British networks internationally would vastly improve the chances for a reversal of British control within the PCI. If this does not occur, then Italy will continue to move on its present course, a course which will either lead to a political "Chilean-style" bloodbath or its economic equivalent as the country is plunged into Third World conditions by strict adherence to IMF-dictated levels of austerity and the destruction of its existing industrial capacity.

—Vivian Freyre