

Report from Italy by Leonardo Servadio and Umberto Pascali

Alexander Haig and the new Mussolini

Haig and Kissinger have planned Craxi's rise for a long time; Michael Ledeen made some progress on the case.

Despite the fact that the vacation period of *Ferragosto* has emptied the halls of ministries and political parties, the word is out in Rome: Kissinger and Haig have decided to put Bettino Craxi, the secretary of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), better known as the new Mussolini, into the prime minister's seat within the month.

Among insiders, it is also known in detail how this cold coup against the Italian Republic was organized. The key individual for maintaining the secret relationship between Craxi and Haig, at least since Haig's appointment and perhaps earlier, is Michael Ledeen, a Georgetown University professor appointed as State's adviser on Italian affairs and terrorism.

Ledeen is a scholar of the Fascist period in Italy. He started his intellectual career with a long study in the archives of Rome and Florence on the origin of Italian Fascism, and reached the amazing conclusion, made available in his books, that the "first Fascist period" was not so bad after all. This is the period in which what he termed "Universal Fascism" evolved: the tendency that was developed by Benito Mussolini's brother Arnaldo which refuted any nationalistic currents in favor of the "ideal" of a Fascist Europe. These theories brought some observers to comment that Ledeen is perhaps now attempting to implement his own ideals with the help of a new Mus-

solini—Bettino Craxi.

In July Ledeen was secretly sent to Rome by Haig with two tasks: to put a stop to the spread of the P-2 scandal, whose implications extended to Haig; and exploring the possibility of putting Craxi into power as soon as possible. In the context of Ledeen's dual mission, various blackmailing operations were launched against the major Italian party, the Christian Democracy (DC), which is split on the question of Craxi.

DC leaders know that pressures coming from Haig and Henry Kissinger are not abstract, at least not since the kidnaping-murder of their chairman, Aldo Moro, in 1978. Before his abduction by the Red Brigades, Moro had been personally warned by Kissinger, who "suggested" that he stop his plans for a national unity government with the Communists. Moro did not follow the advice: his assassination was the beginning of the decay of the DC, and Craxi's accelerated move toward power, which was supported by the Carter administration and its ambassador to Rome, Richard Gardner.

Reagan's election was a shock to the partisans of the Craxi option, but only briefly. Haig communicated to his Italian friends that things would be brought under control. When, shortly after Reagan's inauguration, Craxi came under attack for his "softness" on terrorism, Craxi tried to build himself as "a

Reagan man," and his right-hand man Claudio Martelli attended the inauguration. While there, Martelli met with Ledeen (and probably Haig), and received the green light for a Socialist takeover of Italy. It is generally not known that another important character participated in these talks, "mediating" between the Haig forces and the Socialists: the Venerable Master of the Propaganda 2 lodge, Licio Gelli!

On his return to Italy, Martelli wasted no time bruiting it about that the "PSI is the party of Reagan in Italy," but his timing was premature. Haig and Kissinger had not yet established their control over the new President. Reagan's reaction was quite clear when Ledeen was forced to declare that Martelli was the victim of a misunderstanding, although Ledeen had been Martelli's published source for his own assertions. Ledeen pronounced "President Reagan is philosophically antisocialist." Rumor had it that the White House was particularly enraged with Craxi for his role in the Red Brigades kidnaping of Judge Giovanni D'Urso in December.

Now things have changed. Ledeen's July mission was a "half success," since there is still some resistance in the middle-level DC leadership on the Craxi question. Haig's name, publicly linked to P-2 as Gelli's instigator, vanished from the press, while the "Haig dossier" found among Gelli's papers was made a "state secret."

The final offensive on Craxi's behalf was then begun with the sudden deployment by Haig of an important American "conservative" hastily sent from Tokyo to Rome—to break the last resistance to the new Mussolini.