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## INTERVIEW: Italian labor leader Walter Galbusera

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# Italy should reconsider participation in Soviet gas pipeline, build nuclear plants

*Walter Galbusera, confederal secretary of the UIL, Unione Italiana dei Lavoratori, in charge of the UIL's industrial policy, was interviewed in Rome on Jan. 11 by EIR correspondent Maria Cristina Fiocchi. The UIL is one of Italy's three major labor confederations and is linked to the Socialist International. Excerpts from the interview follow:*

**EIR:** You have stated that the Siberian gas pipeline to Italy could become an energy blackmail weapon against our country. How do you think the energy situation can be solved without falling under the influence of Moscow?

**Galbusera:** The principal reasons for objecting to the purchase of more gas from the Soviet Union are strategic, economic, and political. First of all, we must use economic cooperation as a weapon, a tool which works in a context of détente and facilitates a process of détente. The premises of this desirable phenomenon do not yet exist, therefore [relying on the Soviets for gas] in many respects risks being inopportune and counterproductive, leaving us without an important weapon to reach a better world equilibrium and prospects of cooperation and peace.

Beyond strategic considerations, however, there exist other, no less relevant, international political considerations, such as trade relations between Italy and the Soviet Union. Our country is a net importer vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Until last year our exports were 1-2 trillion [liras] below our exports. This tendency has been somewhat corrected, but we have still not reached the objective, that is, a balance in trade relations with the Soviet Union.

Moreover, in many circumstances a treatment has been applied to the Soviet Union which we apply to developing countries, and this is another provision which is not easy to justify except in the framework of an international policy of cooperation and peace: This is not the situation we have seen recently, in particular given the Polish events and the invasion of Afghanistan. Another circumstance, which is also a concrete fact of economic nature, has to do with the effective necessity of buying gas from the Soviet Union. . . .

According to optimistic calculations, we would have a

very high demand for methane gas [in 1990], but if we look back at what has happened in recent years and months and the predictions of recent years and months, the two don't always coincide. There is a large stated need for methane gas, but consumption is always less. This has also been, let's make this clear, because some large-scale restructuring operations in the transmitting equipment above all in southern Italy, did not take place, and we are not even sure if they will be in the future. Also the suppliers' situation changes.

There is another fact which is significant in regard to the reliability of predictions of the consumption of methane gas, and that concerns the sale by [the state hydrocarbons company] ENI to the state electricity company of very large quantities of methane, 4.7 billion cubic meters, to be used in a way that had always been ruled out in the past as a matter of principle, i.e., for thermoelectric plants, replacing a product like fuel oil which is of rather low value. Methane gas is considered by everyone a high-grade product which should have more profitable uses. Doubtless some problems come up, often having to do with price. ENI obtained a large state subsidy to buy methane gas from Algeria, and it can sell it at absolutely low prices. In the future the state subsidy will be lower, and will disappear within three years. ENI will have to pay the market price for Algerian methane.

All these reasons lead us to consider buying methane gas from the Soviet Union, I am not saying superfluous, but something to be examined all over again. It allows us to make a reflection which is not, let us say, final, that is, *per se* precluding a trade operation, but which would let us re-evaluate the situation. Since methane is one of the principal energy sources used in our country, according to the presently adopted schemes the energy dependence of our country toward the Soviet Union would be more than one third in 1990. In a framework of stabilized world relations it does not matter, in fact, it could be a positive element, but in a different framework it becomes a negative element.

**EIR:** You have spoken of the need to construct nuclear plants.

**Galbusera:** This is an absolute necessity for our country,

having to do not so much with the availability of energy, but of energy at low cost, which affects definitively the competitiveness of the industrial system—I don't think that there will be much of a future for an industrial system like the Italian one, which is still one of the foremost in the world, if it has to buy energy at uncompetitive prices and higher prices than its French, British, Japanese, German, or American competitors.

**EIR:** You gave a figure of one third for Italy's potential dependence on imported gas from the Soviets by 1990. What would be the dependence for all electrical energy consumption?

**Galbusera:** The degree of our country's energy dependence on the Soviet Union could reach a maximum of 10 percent.

**EIR:** What is the role today of the trade-unions and the socialist movement?

**Galbusera:** The role of the unions is sometimes direct and sometimes indirect, in situations in which it is possible to create relations, operate, and even build up official ties. I refer to the case of Poland, which with all its limitations is a new element. It is an indirect political role of support and pressure in all the other situations. It is not a question of thinking of creating improbable clandestine networks by the union. It is a question of making the existence of a clear-cut, pressing initiative permanently felt in official relations with the official structures of the East bloc countries. And on the other hand to build in our country all those initiatives that can contribute, in relations between states, to favoring the conditions for evolution in the Eastern countries.

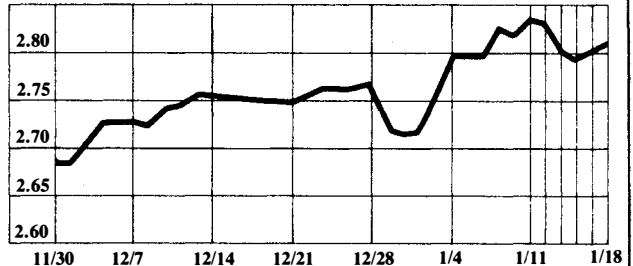
**EIR:** Given the current tensions and the grave strategic situation, the key problem posed is that of defense, as Lyndon LaRouche, candidate for the Democratic Party presidential nomination in the United States, has maintained and as was taken up by President Reagan when he announced his program for antiballistic-missile defense against nuclear attack last March 23. Can you comment on that?

**Galbusera:** We concern ourselves a bit with everything, but we are not always able to have sufficient knowledge on everything. Unfortunately one of the gaps in our knowledge has to do with the ability to discuss strategic military matters effectively and competently. I would just like to make one point. Every defensive weapon in general I think should be encouraged, all the more if, as I seem to understand, it is a defensive weapon limited to rendering inactive, or defusing, others' weapons. In principle I can only agree. In general, all weapons produce scientific discoveries and economic spinoffs. In general, certainly science is neither good nor bad in itself, but the use that one can make of the spinoffs of a defensive weapon of this type can go toward the development of the entire world. This is a positive aspect which we can support even if the purpose is effectiveness of a weapon, albeit a defensive one.

## Currency Rates

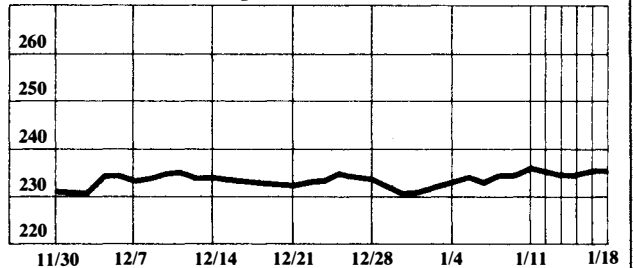
### The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



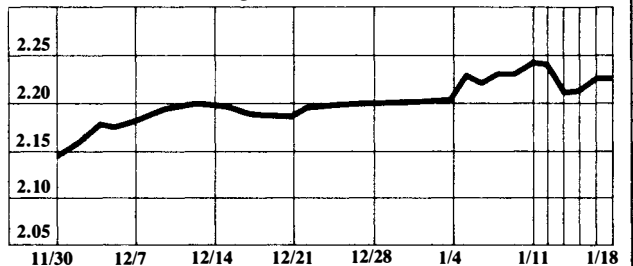
### The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



### The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing



### The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing

