

Report from Italy by Umberto Pascali

Communist Party threatens terrorism

The trade unions are split over the communist demand for a full-scale mobilization against the government.

Senator Vincenzo Carollo of Italy's largest political party, the Christian Democracy (DC), has accused the Italian Communist Party (PCI) of threatening to launch a wave of terrorism. The accusation came as a response to a speech by Sen. Gerardo Chiaromonte, the head of the PCI's Economics Department and a frequent visitor to Moscow.

Chiaromonte had declared he was worried that the current trade union split in Italy could resurrect political terrorism. Senator Carollo asked in response, "Is Chiaromonte worried, or is this a threat?"

Carollo's question referred to the explosive situation in the Italian trade unions where a PCI mobilization has placed Communist union members in a potential alliance with outright terrorists such as the PCI-supported Toni Negri. Chiaromonte declared that Carollo's statement was "nonsense," but he failed to deny the accusations and above all the dramatic implications of what Senator Carollo had said.

For the first time in 20 years, the Italian trade unions are splitting. In Italy there are three major trade union confederations: the CGIL, which includes Communists and Socialists; the CISL, originally linked to the Christian Democracy; and the UIL, in large part controlled by the Socialists.

The issue of the split was a decision by the government of Socialist Bettino Craxi to partially cut the Cost of Living Escalator. The PCI, which for many years has been the champion

of a pro-austerity line under the slogan "equal sacrifices for everyone," seemingly reversed its position and ordered its trade unionists, who represent the majority of the CGIL, to go for a full mobilization against the government using the natural rage among the workers.

At the same time, the PCI mobilized its underground networks, which includes the pro-terrorist grouplets and organizations.

What followed was a series of "wildcat" strikes all over Italy. Several factory councils and factory delegates adopted the line of the "autoconvocazione," i.e., they organized local strikes and began to call for national meetings. In one of these meetings in Milan, 5,000 delegates from all over Italy approved an agenda of regional strikes to culminate in a general strike on March 24 with a gigantic demonstration in Rome. The PCI enthusiastically supported these initiatives. Large amounts of cash are flowing to make sure that the operation succeeds. Thousands of buses and special trains have already been rented to make sure that one and a half million workers and PCI members will be in Rome for the demonstration.

The mobilization has no program, but seeks to exploit the rage and fears of the workers. The PCI leadership has not said a word on the real origins of the economic crisis or on the years-long campaign of pressure and blackmail against Italy by institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and

the Basel Bank for International Settlements. The PCI line on these institutions has always been the same: Austerity, even ferocious austerity, is permissible in Italy, provided it is the PCI itself which carries it out. The PCI program in reality is "post-industrialism," i.e., the controlled disintegration of industry.

The only historical example comparable to the present PCI policy is the anarcho-syndicalist factory occupations in 1920, which resulted in a terrible defeat for the trade unions and prepared the road for Mussolini's fascism.

The other trade unions—UIL, CISL, and the Socialist part of CGIL—distanced themselves from the PCI's "spontaneous mobilization" and the split took place. Currently every union is building up its own independent structure.

The PCI mobilization is provoking a desperate radicalization, exactly the situation Senator Carollo was pointing to. Every sort of extremist and pro-terrorist organization is now working to organize independent factory delegates. This includes the infamous autonomists of terrorist leader Prof. Toni Negri. The fact that Negri used to be, by his own admission, on the payroll of the late Soviet ideologue Mikhail Suslov now takes on a much more dramatic dimension.

And, punctually, terrorism is increasing. After the assassination in Rome of U.S. diplomat Leamon Hunt, a group of magistrates investigating terrorism met in Turin. From that meeting came the information that terrorist structures in Italy are being fully reorganized, not only on a national basis but also at the European level, with operative and well-organized contact with West Germany and France. The machine of terrorism and social destabilization is ready to move into gear.