

ITALY

Socialist leader Craxi attempts to exploit the earthquake crisis

by Mary Sonnenblick

The Socialist president of Italy, working in tandem with the head of the Italian Socialist Party, has used the occasion of the devastating earthquakes that recently struck the south to throw the republic into a constitutional crisis.

Italian President Pertini returned from the devastated earthquake region Nov. 26 to charge that rescue operations were being mishandled. It is unprecedented in Italy for the president to publicly attack the government.

There is no evidence whatsoever of any seismic disaster contingency planning. There was a law enacted on the subject in 1970, but it has never been implemented. After a similar earthquake in the northern Friuli region in 1976, the ruling Christian Democrats (DC) had created a "National Seismic Service", but it apparently exists only on paper.

The inability of the current government, dominated by a Christian Democrat-Socialist Party coalition, to mobilize an effective rescue and relief operation attests to the malignancy infecting Italian society: the commonplace practices of bribery, cheating on public construction and pocketing the difference, misuse and diversion of public service monies. The country's second-largest party, the Communists, charged that shoddy housing construction and cheating on safety standards contributed to the gravity of the disaster.

On Nov. 28, the head of Pertini's Socialist Party, Bettino Craxi, endorsed Pertini's criticisms in an interview to the daily *La Repubblica*.

Interior Minister Rognoni, the man directing the rescue operations, offered his resignation from the cabinet within hours after the Italian president's nationally broadcast statement. Prime Minister Arnaldo Forlani, head of the recently created Christian Democratic government, refused to accept the resignation. Had he not done so, all the press is agreed, the entire government would have collapsed within days.

Strongman

The Craxi interview in *La Repubblica* drew out the implications of President Pertini's accusations against the government.

Craxi charged that an institutional crisis is already a reality in Italy, and the mismanagement of the earthquake rescue operations merely made the fact more evident to the masses of the population. He therefore called for the current parliament to legislate a thorough overhaul of the institutions of the republic.

Craxi's intent in his latest denunciation, and by extension those of his fellow Socialist, President Pertini, were indicated some days earlier by one of the Christian Democratic leaders.

DC faction leader Flaminio Piccoli, summarizing two years' worth of Craxi's activities, told an interviewer for the newspaper *Il Giornale* that there is a new "strongman" on the political scene who wants to return Italy to "a system already condemned by history": fascism.

Though Piccoli did not mention Craxi by name, his interviewer identified the otherwise obvious fact that he referred to none other than Craxi.

Craxi's Socialist Party has been accused of involvement in the 1978 murder of former prime minister Aldo Moro by the terrorist Red Brigades. Police investigations have uncovered evidence of complicity in Moro's murder by PSI leaders, including Giacomo Mancini and Craxi as well.

With the president of the republic now lending himself to the destabilization, the Christian Democracy has closed ranks in attacking the Socialists. Once again, it was Piccoli who issued the most pointed statement, linking Pertini's statements as part of "the design of international masonic groups" who want to take control of the country and remove the Christian Democrats from power.

Oil scandal still gushing?

The Forlani government, a four-way coalition dominated by the Christian Democrats (DC) and Socialists, was already under fire following the eruption of a scandal involving the industry minister, DCer Toni Bisaglia, and two Socialist (PSI) undersecretaries.

The so-called oil scandal involves a network of petroleum product distributors, refiners, and transport-

ers in northern Italy who conspired to commit a giant tax fraud that cost the national treasury at least \$2.2 billion over a 10-year period. Seventy people had been jailed at last report, and investigators have said that over 2,000 people may eventually be implicated.

The fraud was perpetrated by falsifying documents to allow gasoline to be transported as home heating oil, which is taxed at a fraction of the rate on gasoline. In Italy, petroleum products must be accompanied at all points in the storage, refining, and transportation process by tax documentation. The system is ostensibly enforced by a special police unit, the Financial Guard.

The tax evasion network was covered up, however, by systematic bribery by oil businessmen of Financial Guard officials, and the politicians that the Guard is responsible to. Industry Minister Bisaglia has been accused of playing a central role in both the organizing of the network and its coverup. Furthermore, the Christian Democratic head of the Senate finance committee is facing demands for his resignation after reports that he buried a report on the network for two years. Two Socialists, both prominent lawyers and undersecretaries in the present cabinet, are accused of accepting bribes from an oil businessman.

Using a disaster

Meanwhile, the death tolls continue to climb in the devastated earthquake region. Army General Antonio Tamburrino contradicted official estimates of the earthquake's death toll—which set 5,000 as the upper limit of those killed—by saying that there were at least 10,000 deaths in the province of Avellino alone.

The president of the Italian Senate, Christian Democrat Amintore Fanfani, in an alliance with Craxi and the N'drangheta mafia, has proposed that the homeless victims of the earthquakes be forced to remain in the devastated area while aid is brought in. The Communist Party leadership and Christian Democrats around ex-premier Giulio Andreotti have called for survivors to be relocated into hotels outside the area until homes can be reconstructed and sanitary conditions established.

If the victims are forced to remain, thousands of the survivors may die. Already old people and young children have begun to die as a result of continued exposure to freezing conditions and with no shelter but hastily erected tents. The predictable spread of diseases has already begun to appear as a result of the filthy, exposed, and undernourished condition of the victims.

It is the confusion and anguish generated within the population by the horror created by the quake which the Socialist Party, under Craxi, is attempting to manipulate for the fascist designs Piccoli has accused them of. By pitting the president of the republic against the prime minister and his cabinet, Craxi has managed a new constitutional crisis.

WEST GERMANY

Dortmund fights deindustrialization

by Luba George

On Nov. 29, the city of Dortmund, West Germany, was the scene of mass demonstrations. Over 70,000 workers, businessmen, and their families mobilized to protest the shutdown of the area's steel industry and to demand that a new high-technology steel plant, now stalled because of recent steel-export quotas issued by the Brussels Commission of the European Community (EC), be built immediately.

The demonstration followed by two weeks the announcement by the huge Hoesch Steel Company that it could no longer implement a 1979 agreement with the trade unions to build a new oxygen-process steel mill that would be one of the most modern and technologically advanced in the world, to compensate the planned layoff of 4,200 steel workers by 1983. Hoesch is planning to shut down some of its older, obsolescent facilities.

Immediately after Hoesch had made its announcement, workers formed a picket line around Hoesch headquarters, carrying signs demanding immediate construction of the new steel plant. Dortmund's mayor had addressed the demonstrators, and compared the Hoesch closures imposed by EC steel-export restrictions to the post-World War II period when the British occupation army tried to dismantle German industry. "We, our wives, and our children lay down on the machines and kept them from being stolen by the British. This time, everyone in Dortmund is willing to do similar things," he said.

The Davignon plan

The fight in Dortmund has become a test for West Germany. This city of 730,000 in the highly industrialized Ruhr area has been, like America's Midwest, consistently disparaged as an agglomeration of "sunset industries." The Davignon Steel Plan, which is the instrument for carrying out the destruction of Europe's "sunset" steel industry, calls for Europe and West Germany to forcibly reduce their steel capacity and exports by 18 percent. The plan is named for Etienne