

Report from Italy by Liliana Gorini

IMF vampires descend on Italy

No wonder the Venetians are pushing belief in vampires: The IMF measures the government has adopted, will kill.

On Sept. 5, during its first cabinet meeting after the summer vacation, the Italian government discussed a disastrous austerity package, which has already provoked a wave of protests that might soon lead to a government crisis. The package satisfies the loan conditionalities put forward by an International Monetary Fund (IMF) delegation, which came to Rome last March to demand heavy cuts in the health and pension system in order to balance the Italian budget.

Treasury Minister Giovanni Goria announced at the cabinet meeting the privatization of all social benefits, declaring that from now on "the state will have to give up its mediating role in sectors which could be taken over by private enterprise." In order to reduce domestic expenditures by 2 trillion liras (\$1 billion), Goria proposed, in a 10-page document submitted for discussion and approval by the parliament, that the level of expenditures for health, pensions, transportation, and other services should not rise above the level of inflation, which he projected at 6%.

Goria was immediately supported by Giovanni Spadolini, the head of the Republican Party. This tiny party, heavily dominated by bankers, plays a key role in the five-party coalition government headed by Socialist Party Prime Minister Bettino Craxi, but Spadolini acted like a man who is determined to bring down the government if the heavy dose of austerity is not approved. In a letter to Craxi, Spadolini invited him to give the nation a

signal of "austerity and rigor" and "to immediately do something in order to reduce the domestic deficit, cutting expenses and distributing sacrifices."

To avoid a government crisis, Craxi, who had previously resisted IMF pressures to cut health and pension expenditures, gave in and spoke at the cabinet meeting of "new budget rules to eliminate waste." He added that "among expenditures, priority will be given to such sectors as justice, cultural goods and ecology, which answer to a new demand from society."

The elderly and workers who will have to give up their health insurance and pensions can console themselves with the thought that "their" funds will now be applied to realizing the post-industrial dreams of the Greens, who have a growing movement in Italy.

The Goria plan has already provoked a wave of protests, even if officially both the Christian Democrats, still the largest party in the country, and the Republicans have fully endorsed it.

The chairman of the Christian Democratic Party, Flaminio Piccoli, opened the revolt by declaring, "It is not possible to pretend that all citizens will be able to pay social benefits by themselves. We cannot abruptly go back to total privatization. We should also watch out, since most of the cuts will be in the health sector, and this will greatly favor private insurance firms" like the Assicurazioni Generali of Venice, one of the world's largest insurance companies, which demanded two years ago that health services

be privatized.

The trade unions have also announced a battle against the austerity package, and asked for an urgent meeting with Craxi on this issue. The general secretary of the Catholic trade union CISL, Marini, declared that "such a brutal policy of expense cuts cannot be accepted" and a colleague of his, Fausto Vigevan, characterized Goria's plan as "ridiculous."

However, neither Piccoli nor the trade unions ever mentioned that it was the IMF which had demanded the specified budget cuts.

People will die if these cuts are implemented, particularly in southern Italy, where health conditions are identical to those of a Third-World country. Pandemic diseases will follow, fully realizing the dreams of the population controllers behind the IMF, of cutting population worldwide by 2 billion people.

It is definitely not accidental that the acceptance of the IMF vampire program has coincided with an upsurge of death-cultism and revivals of the Dark Ages. In Padua, a city dominated by the nefarious influence of Venetian monetarism for centuries, the great "Festival of Horror" began on Aug. 24 at the ancient Benedictine abbey of Santa Giustina in Prato della Valle. Vampires, blood cocktails, exhibits on Dracula, anti-vampire crosses, portraits of the goddess Kali with scenes of cannibalism, are some of the things on display until Oct. 13. The festival has received massive media publicity, including ABC-TV in America. The most prominent book on display, *Dissertation on the appearances of spirits and on vampires of Hungary*, written by a Benedictine monk and first published in Venice in 1756, argues that the existence of vampires must be studied with an open mind.