

## Report from Italy by Renato Tosatto

### A new student movement

*The issues they are protesting are legitimate enough, but where they will be led may not be.*

**T**he staging of a 100,000-strong demonstration of students in Rome on Nov. 16, protesting cutbacks in the education budget, heralds a new student movement in Italy. This is the first demonstration of such size since the student demonstrations of 1968 and 1977. The students involved are young, averaging 17-18 years old, and the issues of austerity they protest are real enough. Those behind it are neither young nor naive, and are prepared for cynical manipulation.

After the rally, as trains carrying demonstrators arrived in Milan's central rail station, riots erupted between supporters of the Italian Communist Party and the countercultural "Autonomists." The Nov. 20 Italian press carried news of the clashes on the same page with a declaration of terrorist Barbara Balzerani: "The Red Brigades are still alive!" and "There is a new wind of rebellion."

The youth organization of the Communists, the Communist Youth Federation of Italy (FGCI), has a key role. At the beginning of 1985, the FGCI began organizing around a "charter of students' rights."

From there, things proceeded so rapidly that nothing could have been coincidental. The mass media gave all necessary support, talking of the "new realities of the youth"—punks, skinheads, yuppies ad nauseum. Then, the media launched a "debate" over the student riots of 1968-1977, featuring the case of the killing of a young fascist student, Sergio Ramelli, in 1975.

Then, members of Avanguardia Operaia ("Workers Vanguard," Trot-

skyst) and other extremist groups were arrested in the Ramelli case. Then, a Nov. 12 meeting in Milan of the old leaders of the 1968 student riots protested this attempt to incriminate the 1968 movement. At the meeting, a leaflet was distributed by a member of the terrorist Autonomia Operaia (Worker Autonomy) group, Oreste Scalzone, which demanded amnesty for jailed terrorists.

All the while, protests in the schools were growing, thanks to too few classrooms and higher school taxes promised in the government's 1986 financial bill, dictated by the International Monetary Fund. But the demonstrators have never named the IMF.

In the lead were students of the Fine Arts High School in Milan, led by a parents committee, all old demonstrators of 1968. Their student children conducted a series of bigger and bigger demonstrations, in 133 different cities, in preparation for the first, Nov. 16 national demonstration in Rome.

The sociologists are behind it, following a script already acted out in 1968 and 1977. There is Umberto Eco, director of the Communications Institute of the special art school in Bologna (DAMS), a laboratory for every kind of insanity. Eco is coming forward as the "mediator" between the DAMS students and the school authorities. One is reminded of University of Trento sociologist Francesco Alberoni, who gave a master's degree to Renato Curcio, who then founded the Red Brigades.

The demonstration included all

types, event students of the FDG, the Fascist Youth Front. The hand of the communists was evident in slogans like: "More money for school and less for star wars."

The unions, especially the communist CGIL, provided transportation to Rome. Education Minister Sen. Franca Falcucci told TV news: "It is well known who paid for the special trains for the students." The unions gave demonstration organizers their offices, telephones, and money. And money was given by the FGCI.

Carlo Ghezzi, general secretary of the Chamber of Labor of Milan, said: "We gave three million lire [about \$1,750] and permission to use our buildings." Federico Ottolenghi, head of the League of the Milanese Students of the FGCI, said: "The Milan coordinators of the students received 16 million (about \$14,000), 11 were from the Unions, 3 from the FGCI, about the others I don't know. Maybe also from the PCI." President of the Republic Francesco Cossiga, an Aspen Institute member, supported the students. Deputy Laura Fincato, in charge of schools for the Socialist Party (PSI) of Premier Bettino Craxi, said "We dedicated a whole PSI steering meeting to the problem. . . ." Craxi himself said: "I know very well who paid for the trains. . . . We don't want the trust of the youth to be used as an instrument of political pressure." The government is considering measures to meet the student demands.

Interior Minister Oscar Luigi Scalfaro is carefully following the developments, and returned quickly from a meeting with the Drug Enforcement Administration in El Paso, Texas to Rome to be sure there were no police-student clashes. The danger that the students will be manipulated, leading to destabilization of the country, is very real.