

Report from Italy by Renato Tosatto

Natta-Gorbachov pact against SDI

Along the trail of the Communist Party leader's pilgrimage to Moscow, one spots the footprints of the Israeli Mossad.

On Jan. 27-28, Italian Communist Party (PCI) secretary-general Alessandro Natta met in Moscow with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov. It was the first official visit by a PCI head since Leonid Brezhnev and Enrico Berlinguer, now both deceased, met in September 1979. Since then, relations between the Italian party and the Moscow "mother" have been limited to "funeral diplomacy": Berlinguer or his successor Natta trekked to Moscow for the rites of three Soviet party heads; Gorbachov came to Rome for Berlinguer's funeral in June 1984.

The timing of Natta's pilgrimage is suggestive, as it coincides with the Italian Communists' throwing of an apparent political "life-line" to Premier Bettino Craxi.

The major media are talking up a new perspective in Italian politics: the so-called "programmatic government," a proposal of Italian Communist Party chief Alessandro Natta. According to the Italian weekly *Panorama*, Premier Craxi might consider the "programmatic government" to get the support of the Communist Party for his government. In such an arrangement, the Communist Party, by direct or indirect involvement, would control the policies of the Italian state.

Panorama says that Premier Craxi, head of the small Socialist Party, might resort to allying with the Communists, because the leader of the Christian Democracy, Italy's largest party, wants to topple him and get a Christian Democrat back in as premier. In itself,

Panorama's script seems unlikely, since Craxi strongly backs the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative, and the Italian Communists have just signed a pact against the SDI with the Soviets.

In Moscow, Natta and his comrades, including veteran Secretariat member and PCI "foreign minister" Gian Carlo Pajetta, held two four-hour meetings with Gorbachov. The meetings led to closer ties between the two parties following a period of apparent conflict—although in reality, the Italian party was always on the Soviet side on the major political issues such as disarmament, pacifism, anti-SDI propaganda, and neutralism.

At the dinner concluding the two-day visit, Gorbachov honed in on the SDI, blustering, "We are not afraid of being behind in the space race if it is imposed upon us," but, "The Soviet Union is, as a matter of principle, irreconcilably opposed to the 'Star Wars' project and not because it is an American project. . . . Any 'space shield' is easy to transform into a space sword, and whoever has it in his hand could not resist the temptation to use it."

Gorbachov added: "The democratic and leftist forces, including the Communists, should act in the struggle against the threat of war in a more concerted way. . . . We have to seek a common political denominator for mutual actions and cooperation on the cardinal problem of the present period. . . . That refers . . . in general to the democratic anti-missile move-

ment, to all the peace-loving forces."

In their final communiqué, Natta and Gorbachov called for the "need for all possible forces to be utilized by everyone to reject the arms race, to stop the militarization of space." It appears they also agreed on a certain Mediterranean outlook.

In its coverage of the Natta trip, Italy's *Corriere della Sera* reported on Jan. 29: "The U.S.S.R., interested in reestablishing dialogue with Israel, relaunched the proposal of an international conference which takes into account the rights of the Palestinian people and the guarantees of existence of the Jewish state. [PCI Secretariat member] Pajetta thought a statement by Gorbachov was significant in this context: 'We are among those who founded Israel,' as if to say that the question had never been put in doubt by Moscow."

This suggests another angle on the PCI trip—Italy's potential role in the ongoing deal between the Israeli Mossad and the Soviet KGB, to turn the Mediterranean into a Russian lake. On Jan. 30, the day after Natta's delegation got back from Moscow, the Italian politician reputed closest to the Mossad, Republican Party secretary Giovanni Spadolini, was quoted in the daily *Il Giornale* after his return from the World Jewish Congress in Jerusalem.

In his Jerusalem speech, ex-premier Spadolini revived "the invitation to an act of farsightedness and generosity on Israel's part, as well as the appeal to the Soviet Union to resume the flow of emigration of Soviet Jews into Israel, in the context reestablishing diplomatic relations between Moscow and the Jewish state, following the logic of the immediate postwar years, when the U.S.S.R. was the first to recognize Ben Gurion and Golda Meir's state."