

Report from Rome by Thierry Lalevée

Andreotti exposed in Qaddafi trial

Charging "slander of a head of state" who is not a head of state, has put the Italian foreign minister out on a limb.

On March 5, a legal case unprecedented in the history of the Italian Republic began at the 7th District Court of the Tribunal of Rome; four members of an international organization, the Schiller Institute, are being tried for "offenses against the dignity and prestige of a foreign head of state"—Libya's Muammar Qaddafi!

The issue goes back to July 13, 1983, when four persons now belonging to the Schiller Institute set up a police-authorized picket line denouncing Qaddafi's involvement in international terrorism, much to the delight of Roman passers-by. However, it was not until January 1986 (!) that the Institute was informed that an unnamed party had filed a complaint.

A strange case indeed. For nearly three years, Italian justice was processing a legal case against four persons without informing them. Meanwhile Libya's Qaddafi has grown quite vocal in attacks on those associated with the Schiller Institute. In January 1984, the Libyan news agency JANA denounced *EIR* founder Lyndon H. LaRouche, husband of Institute founder Helga Zepp-LaRouche, for allegedly plotting a military coup against Qaddafi. On Jan. 25, 1986, the Libyan "People's Bureau" (embassy) in Bonn wrote an official letter to the Institute denouncing its "slanders" against Libya. On Feb. 15, a Libyan representative interrupted a speech at a conference of the Institute in Madrid, to do the same.

The charges brought against Insti-

tute members have not been heard in a court here since Italy became a Republic in 1946. Indeed, had they been admissible, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators from all shades of the political spectrum who have held rallies in the past 30 years would have to be tried, too. It would also mean that newspapers and journalists could no longer write unfavorably of a foreign country or a foreign head of state.

The cynicism of those pushing this case is all the more brazen considering the silence of the same courts in the face of numerous public assassination threats and violent denunciations of President Reagan by the Italian left over the last two years.

Obviously, the case is not merely a matter of the Schiller Institute versus Muammar Qaddafi. In fact, as events would prove, it is a political battle between the Schiller Institute and their associates and sympathizers in Italy, and the leading Italian proponent of "New Yalta" accommodations with Moscow and Qaddafi: Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti.

The personal involvement of Andreotti in this fight emerged clearly during the trial itself, before Judge Bettiol of the 7th District of the Rome Penal Court. A day before the trial, Institute representatives Fiorella Operto, Antonio Gaspari, and this writer held a news conference at the Rome Courthouse. A front-page article in *Giornale d'Italia* had been published the same day. We described the case and presented a new special report by

EIR's European bureaus, Moscow's Terrorist Satrapy: a Case Study of Libya's Qaddafi, to the daily press and news agencies.

In response to questions, we also outlined the line of defense to be pursued by the Institute's lawyer, Silvio Suster: There can be no trial because, according to Libya's own law and formal structure of power, Qaddafi is not the "Peopledom" of Libya's "head of state" or President. Libya has no head of state.

As the trial convened on March 5, Judge Bettiol informed the accused and their lawyer that he had taken some time to study the question of whether or not Qaddafi was a "head of state," and had received an answer by the personal secretary of Foreign Minister Andreotti: "Although on a formal level, Qaddafi is not recognized as a head of state, the treatment he was given by President Mitterrand and Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky, implied that Colonel Qaddafi was given all rights as Libya's representative. For this reason, we consider Qaddafi a head of state, to all intents."

But attorney Suster immediately pulled out Qaddafi's own *Green Book*, and quoted the leader's own words to the effect: "I am not a head of state."

Judge Bettiol decided to postpone the trial indefinitely, announcing that he would next call on a representative of the Libyan embassy to testify on Qaddafi's real status!

The Italian judge never bothered to tell the Institute who had filed the complaint in the first place, but the involvement of Andreotti's office made things quite clear. According to journalists, the case, which continues to be covered in the papers, has become one of the hottest items in Roman political circles. Talk is that this time, the foreign minister has gone too far.