

## Report from Rome by Liliana Celani

### Patriots appeal to save Italy

*A new movement has emerged to rally the nation against the threat from the Soviet Union, AIDS, and economic collapse.*

About 50 distinguished Italians, among them a former chief of the defense staff, generals, industrialists, a parliamentarian, teachers, and musicians, on Feb. 24 published in the Rome daily *Il Giornale d'Italia* the first "Call to Italian Patriots." The call they issued launches a new movement calling itself Patriots for Italy, to save the country from the dangers threatening it: the AIDS plague, the Soviet threat, and economic and moral collapse.

Among the signers are Gen. Duilio Fanali, former chief of the defense staff (Italy's highest military post); Col. Fernando Pouget, former collaborator of Guglielmo Marconi in the Italian Army; Prof. Bernardino Lattanzi of the Guidonia School of Aerodynamics, which first tested hypersonic flight; Michele Colombino, who chairs the World Piedmontese Association and is a regional counsellor in Turin; Salvatore Meleleo, a parliamentarian of Italy's majority party, the Christian Democracy (DC); Sen. Benedetto Todini of the Rome provincial association; and Fiorella Operto, the chairman of the Schiller Institute in Italy.

The "Call to Italian Patriots" reads as follows:

"Dear Italians: Never before was our nation in such danger of being destroyed physically as well as morally. The AIDS plague which is spreading so rapidly, is so dangerous that it might kill the whole world population within 40 years; it would be a worse catastrophe than nuclear war. As with all epi-

demics in the past, AIDS is the consequence of a usurious economic policy demanded by the financial oligarchy. Such economic austerity caused misery, particularly among the populations of the Third and Fourth World; and it was the collapse of living standards which spread the virus so rapidly. Also our nation is so impoverished, morally and economically, that it does not guarantee the demographic development and the well-being of all Italians. The measures against AIDS adopted by the Italian government will not stop the epidemics; we need a large-scale emergency health program. And we have to have the courage to change current economic and financial policies. Italy urgently needs an economic boom.

"Another enemy threatens Italy and Europe: Soviet imperialism's war plans. Do not be fooled by the 'reforms' and the détente proposal of Gorbachov: Moscow has declared war on Western nations, a war fought with all means, from terrorism to sabotage, from drugs to political corruption to moral degeneracy. Only from a position of strength shall the Atlantic Alliance start negotiations with the Soviets. Italy can contribute, with its scientific and technological potential, in cooperation with the United States, Europe, and Japan, to realize the space shield. Any 'historical compromise' with Moscow will have disastrous consequences for our freedom.

"We call on all Italians who want to defend the nation and to see it progress, to join us in the creation of a

Patriots for Italy Movement. Only by reviving the great Italian scientific and cultural tradition, the ideals of Dante, Leonardo, and Verdi, the Christian heroism of San Francesco and Santa Caterina da Siena, and the noble political passion of patriots and scientists around Cavour, will Italy make a precious contribution to humanity, in facing the challenges of our time."

The call was issued in the middle of a new wave of terrorism hitting Italy, and a government crisis provoked by the "Moscow faction" inside the Christian Democracy, led by Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti, who is currently visiting Bulgaria and the Soviet Union, whitewashing the Soviet role in the attempted assassination of the Pope.

The call was welcomed by military officers and other citizens who called to join the Patriots, and expressed their fear that Andreotti might become the next premier and form a pro-Soviet government, with the support of the Italian Communist Party. Premier Bettino Craxi has announced the demise of his ruling coalition, and Andreotti is demanding his "right" to form a new government, as soon as he returns from Moscow.

To further intensify the political and economic crisis in Italy, Gorbachov is extending the "carrot" of new détente offers to the Italian government, through a message delivered to Craxi.

The effect the Patriots' call had in Rome and all over Italy can be seen not only by the many phone calls the Patriots received, but also by the refusal of some dailies, such as *Il Giornale*, which claims to address a conservative audience, to publish it as a paid ad, because of its clear words against the Soviet role in terrorism and drugs, which deny the "friendly image" the Italian press is portraying of Gorbachov.