

EIR Feature

Craxi versus De Mita: Italy moves toward 1992

by Webster G. Tarpley

The Italian Republic, founded after the Second World War by Alcide De Gasperi, now lies squarely in the path of the immense steamroller of the cartelized "single market" which is scheduled to flatten the nations of Western Europe between now and 1992. "1992" and the "single market" have become a shorthand for selling 330 million citizens of the European Community into the thrall of continent-wide monopolies of banking, insurance, foodstuffs, and finance, all controlled in turn by the pro-Soviet titled feudal aristocracy. In Italy, as in the other EC countries, 1992 brings the long shadows of a supernational political regime ranging from merely authoritarian to downright totalitarian.

In Italy, as elsewhere, one observes a flareup of partisan warfare among political factions; this reflects the fact that those interests and factions who manage to be on the inside of the 1992 supernational regime may hope to survive, whereas those who are locked out must reckon with triage and cannibalization mercilessly meted out by the insiders. The brutal struggle to be on the inside explains the current round of conflicts.

In Italy, the struggle to emerge on top in 1992 has produced the clash of two coalitions of political and economic forces which tend to cut across the definable lines of party, church, and freemasonry. At first approximation, these can best be labeled with the names of the dominant bosses within each coalition: on the one hand, the premier of the governing five-party coalition and secretary of the majority Christian Democratic Party (DC) Ciriaco De Mita, and on the other, the former premier (of the years 1982-87) and secretary of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI), Bettino Craxi. Craxi's newer northern mafia squares off against the older southern *camorra* of De Mita. Craxi's base of operations is PSI-ruled Milan, where a new-style radical-chic mafia based on drugs and drug-money lander has emerged over the recent two decades under the PSI mayors, and Craxi backers, like Aldo Aniasi and Tognoli.

De Mita has his home base near Naples, where the organized crime machine calls itself the *camorra*, and where politics revolve around the parish church and oratory. Avellino, as part of the Mezzogiorno, is one of the many areas that will



Ex-Prime Minister Bettino Craxi (above); left to right, Deputy Prime Minister Gianni De Michelis, Prime Minister Ciriaco De Mita, Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti.

be written off in 1992. This grim fact does not stop De Mita from leading the fight for free-market liberal economics in the DC, a sure way to destroy a party whose centerpiece has always been the state sector. De Mita plans to liquidate steel, chemicals, nuclear energy, and shipbuilding in favor of tourism, movies, fashion, and television.

Craxi was able to stay in office as prime minister longer than any politician since De Gasperi, and it is clear that he would like to make that tenure permanent. He is fond of comparing himself to Giuseppe Garibaldi, the activist of Italian unification and the Risorgimento. During his years in Palazzo Chigi, he was also frequently compared to Benito Mussolini, an image that Craxi tried to meld into a personality cult. His values in office were presented as "decisiveness" and "guts." He called the Italian Parliament a "stockyard." Often, just like his model, his tough-guy posturing crossed over into the ridiculous (as when he said before meeting the British prime minister, "I only know Mrs. Thatcher by bed.")

Craxi's entourage is typified by the Venetian Gianni De Michelis, now vice-president of the Council of Ministers. De Michelis, although approaching 50, still sports the long and greasy locks of a 1960s hippy; after his television appearances, disgusted Italians write in demanding that he be forced to wash his hair. De Michelis's hobby is visiting night clubs and discotheques, accompanied by a clientele of starlets, harlots, and political groupies which Rome political observers have dubbed "the sows." De Michelis is also a technocrat, the president of the Italian branch of the Aspen Institute.

Craxi's trumps

In his contest with De Mita, Craxi possesses two formidable trumps. These are first his connections with the U.S. State Department and Central Intelligence Agency, and secondly the warm support for him radiating from the Secretariat of State of the Vatican, and most especially from the leftist Cardinal Achille Silvestrini.

Craxi seized control over the PSI at the Hotel Midas palace in Rome back in 1976 thanks to U.S. support. In 1982, Craxi's ascent to Prime Minister was facilitated by the notorious support for the Socialist International on the part of U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig. Haig's emissary to Craxi in those days was Michael Ledeen, the self-professed universal fascist with links to the P-2 freemasonic lodge and the safe houses of the Italian terrorist Red Brigades. Ledeen, who was identified during the U.S. Irangate scandal as the initiator of the process that led to the arming of Ayatollah Khomeini, is an asset of the Israeli Mossad. It must be assumed that the various Shultzes and Websters of official Washington, as well as private U.S. financial interests, still use Ledeen as a go-between. The support given to Craxi by the U.S. embassy under Carter's ambassador, Richard Gardner, tour guide for the late Billy Carter on the Roman leg of his Libyan escapades, has been continued under the tenure of Reagan's man, organized crime figure Maxwell Raab.

Craxi's support among the Casaroli-Silvestrini forces in the Vatican rests on material interests, not spirituality. In 1984, the concordat between the Italian state and the Holy

See, first stipulated in the Lateran Pacts of 1929, was brought up for revision and renewal. The result was a new concordat which, among other things, disestablished the Roman Catholic Church as Italy's state religion. But, in the view of Silvestrini and some others, the 1984 concordat was palatable because, through its provisions, the Italian state became the disbursing agency for the paychecks of Roman Catholic parish priests. Some in the Vatican joked that with the help of Craxi, an atheist and supporter of abortion, divorce, euthanasia, pornography, and secularism, the Holy See had gotten a better deal than would have been offered by any of the Christian Democratic leaders, most of whom are practicing believers.

Craxi's support from the CIA and Silvestrini helped to pave the way for significant election gains by the PSI in the municipal elections of June 1988. In this test the PSI, which had started the decade with less than 10% of the total votes cast in national elections, upped its haul to around 17-18%, a 35-year record. At the same time, Craxi's rivals in the Italian Communist Party (PCI), continued their decline from the heights attained back in 1975-76 under the late Enrico Berlinguer, now coming in with about 22%. All at once, a novelty seemed possible in the immobile Italian party system: the PSI was within reach of the *sorpasso*, within reach of overtaking the PCI as the second largest party after the DC, within reach of becoming the dominant force on what is called "the left."

The PCI, back in the middle 1970s, had appeared as an attractive conveyance of upward mobility to a legion of office-seekers and social climbers. These have now deserted the PCI in favor of Craxi. To put the point in slightly different terms, the PCI had been composed of three factions: liberals, Catholics, and Stalinists. The liberals have defected to Craxi, among them writers like Lucio Colletti; the Catholic and Stalinist plebeians remain in the PCI. Factory workers, once the backbone of the PCI membership, have been in steep decline for nearly 20 years. In addition, even the ritual self-criticism of the Gorbachov perestroika has been devastating for the PCI, which is likely to continue to decline in vote-getting power. The PCI is now divided into *correnti* (factions) just like the DC and the other Italian parties. Of these, the KGB faction of PCI "Interior Minister" Ugo Pecchioli, as well as the CIA faction of right-wing Amendola heir Giorgio Napolitano are both supporting Craxi. The new party secretary, the weak opportunist Achille Occhetto (a Sicilian), tends to line up with De Mita on certain issues.

But with the PCI hemorrhaging votes, some observers think that Craxi may have a chance of breaking the bipolar dominance (DC-PCI, Catholics, and Communists) which has dominated Italian politics since the late 1940s. The perspective of political commentator Giorgio Galli in his 1966 study, *Il bipartitismo imperfetto: comunisti e democristiani in Italia* (The imperfect bipartism: communists and Christian Democrats in Italy)—the perspective of busting up DC and PCI in

favor of the "socialist area" around the PSI—seems to such observers inscribed on the current agenda. The Vatican group around Casaroli and Silvestrini has been only too eager to accept this idea.

Craxi's principal ally on the Italian political scene is none other than the perennial DC politician and former Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti, who has for some years been ensconced at the Palazzo Farnesina as foreign minister. During the early 1980s, after his most recent tenure as premier (1976-79), "the star" Giulio had formed a close alliance with the PCI with the goal of being elected President of the Italian Republic, with the clear intention of expanding the powers of that largely ceremonial office into something much more resembling the French Fifth Republic.

But Andreotti failed in that design, and former Interior Minister (at the time of the Moro assassination in 1978) and Prime Minister Francesco Cossiga got the presidency. When Craxi fell as premier in 1987, Andreotti waged a bitter fight to return as prime minister, but failed, owing to the opposition of the PSI. The premier's post went to former Treasury Minister Giovanni Goria, an inept younger man, who was in any case a stalking horse for De Mita. When Goria was toppled earlier this year, it was DC chief De Mita who became prime minister.

Andreotti, always known for his "ductility," wasted no time in reversing alliances, especially since the decline of the PCI was part of the handwriting on the wall. Andreotti has for the moment accepted the role of partner to Craxi in the quest for a 1992 authoritarian regime. His first target of opportunity along the way is the post of DC Secretary. Editorial scribblers are now busily prating that premier and DC boss (the pileup of offices) are too much responsibility for De Mita; Andreotti hopes to be the beneficiary of this campaign.

De Mita's coalition has an altogether more southern, old-fashioned flavor. It is the traditional DC undergovernment of bribery and corruption, but still preferable to the technocratic holocaust of the PSI. De Mita's biggest weakness is that he insists, in order to retain what he imagines to be the support of certain decisive financier factions, in wrecking his own base with a policy of savage austerity. The avenging angel of this austerity is the PSI Treasury Minister Giuliano Amato, a man who calls himself a Catholic but who aspires to the role of Hjalmar Schacht. In September, Amato sent a circular to the other ministers demanding to know what budget cuts they were offering. If the cuts proposed were not enough, Amato went on menacingly, he would make further cuts himself. Amato wants to close hospitals, to cut the wretched pensions of invalids (the standard INPS pension is about 290,000 lire per month), old people, war veterans, and the like.

End of secret ballot

One traditional Italian defense against such barbarity has been the unwillingness of a mass of DC back-benchers in the

Montecitorio parliament to ratify the cuts. Among the hundreds of DC deputies there exists a very numerous group of malcontents who, calling themselves pawns, frequently ambush legislation. The method is that of the snipers who use the secret ballots often prescribed by the rules of the Italian parliament to attack unwanted bills under the cover of anonymity. Now, Antonio Maccanico, De Mita's minister for institutional reform, has initiated a successful campaign to abolish the secret ballot, to put the snipers out of business and force all the DC deputies to toe the line laid down by the party secretary, on pain of being purged.

It is a totalitarian measure designed to facilitate the murder of Italian citizens through banker-imposed austerity. Maccanico's characteristic justification: "In the British House of Commons, the parliamentarians can't take any initiatives on the budget at all." The first bill that De Mita wants voted on with no secret ballot is the 1989 finance bill, in effect, the Italian budget.

The measure, although it did pass in October, was not unopposed. When De Mita went to Montecitorio in an attempt to sell his "institutional reforms," the vice president of the Chamber of Deputies, DC leader Gerardo Bianco, explicitly attacked De Mita's proposal. "I don't think it's possible to support proposals which, by weakening the parliament, would weaken democracy," summed up Bianco to the applause of all the DC deputies present, plus that of the PCI. De Mita's "liberal austerity" is not popular.

De Mita's principal ally is Interior Minister Antonio Gava, the latest of a dynasty of Naples DC politicians, and a former stalwart of the "Dorotheans," the DC current that was based on the state-held conglomerate IRI and the other components of the large Italian state sector. Gava has been faced with a significant flareup of terrorism, partly directed against the government itself.

Terrorism

Rome insiders point out the following interesting correlation: When Craxi is the premier, terrorism tends to subside. When someone other than Craxi takes over, terrorism boils over, with the terrorists taking aim at those who seem to be the main obstacles to a Craxi comeback. Craxi's notorious terrorist connections, documented by numerous studies in the 1970s, have never lapsed, despite the heavy losses suffered by the Red Brigades and other groups in the interim.

Thus, on April 16 this year, Red Brigades terrorists shot down Senator Roberto Ruffilli, one of the closest associates and advisers to De Mita. Also this year, a Red Brigades terrorist suspect was taken into custody not far from De Mita's home.

On Sept. 6, a Carabinieri (military police) unit under the command of Gen. Roberto Jucci raided four Rome safehouses of the Red Brigades faction that calls itself *Partito comunista combattente* (Fighting Communist Party), arresting 21 terrorists, including Fabio Ravalli and Maria Cappelli, both

wanted for the Ruffilli slaying. General Jucci announced that these raids had largely wiped out the newly created terrorist infrastructure in the Rome area. Rome insiders interpreted the successful raids as the elimination of terrorist assets which Craxi had intended to unleash against De Mita and his friends. Other insiders noted that Interior Minister Gava enjoys good relations with the *camorra*, the Naples-area underworld, and that *camorra* intelligence networks may be working with the government against the Red Brigades.

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Another aspect of the fight over Craxi's terrorist assets involves the arrest, on charges of murder, of Adriano Sofri, the historic leader of *Lotta continua*, Continuing Struggle, the celebrated crazy Maoist formation of the 1968-75 era. *Lotta continua* was known for its slogans of "proletarian shopping," or shoplifting, and "Let's take over the city." Behind the Maoist hooliganism was something much more ugly: an in-house assassination capability. The charge against Sofri is that he ordered the spring 1972 shooting of Inspector Luigi Calabresi, a Milan cop whose anti-terror investigations *Lotta continua* obviously feared. But Sofri is much more than a relic of the destabilizations of 1968. He has been a top adviser to Craxi and his sidekick Martelli, according to some accounts Craxi's speechwriter. When Craxi made a state visit to Peking, Sofri was part of his official entourage.

Lotta continua was run by Sofri, Luigi Bobbio, Guido Viale, Marco Boato (now a senator), and Mauro Rostagno. It is thus no coincidence that Rostagno was shot to death by assailants in Trapani, Sicily, where he ran what was billed as a drug therapy center. Rostagno had been at the University of Trento together with Boato and Red Brigades founder Renato Curcio; he unquestionably knew much about two decades of Italian terrorism and therefore much about the relations of the terrorists with the PSI. Rostagno had reportedly been ready to talk before he was shot.

De Mita's allies

Other allies of De Mita include, interestingly, Gianni Agnelli and Fiat, which has now passed Volkswagen as the largest auto producer in Europe. Whatever Agnelli may represent on the ideological plane (certainly nothing good), he nevertheless remains the head of a large firm that must clash with the post-industrial thrust of Craxi. Agnelli is the owner of companies like Aeritalia, a world leader in aerospace, and also presides over a large part of the Italian industrial-military complex, which is one of the world's top half-dozen arms exporters. Agnelli supports the U.S. SDI and wants a prominent Italian role in it. Craxi's ideal of a post-industrial entrepreneur is Silvio Berlusconi, owner of several national television channels which are a cultural holocaust in their own right.

Eugenio Scalfari, publisher of *La Repubblica*, now the largest Italian daily, supports De Mita. Indeed, *La Repubblica* is widely regarded as the semi-official paper of the De Mita regime. Scalfari supports De Mita because he regards De Mita as favorable to the PCI.

The centerpiece of De Mita's convergence with the PCI has been the city government of Palermo, Sicily, which has the form of the "historical compromise," a DC-PCI coalition. The Palermo situation has driven Craxi and Martelli to public transports of rage. Mayor Orlando's coalition in the Palermo city council was set up with the help of a Jesuit faction based on the Centro Arrupe which includes Padre Bartolomeo Sorge (forced out of his editing post in Rome) and Padre Pintacuda. Other Jesuits, like Padre Macchi of San Fedele of Milan, have remained loyal to Craxi. The Italian Bishops Conference (Conferenza Episcopale Italiana, CEI) under the Cardinal Vicar of Rome, Ugo Polletti, tends to side with De Mita and the older DC.

Parallel to the split in the Jesuits goes a split in the freemasonic lodges. The freemasons of Piazza del Gesù are with Andreotti and Craxi. But the other masons, those of Palazzo Giustiniani, support De Mita. This situation is reflected by the presence of the small Italian Republican Party (PRI, the Mazzini party) on the side of De Mita. The PRI is now led by Giorgio LaMalfa, who continues to demand austerity in the tradition of his ghoulish father, the late Ugo LaMalfa.

As Craxi surveys the situation, his most pressing problem comes down to this: In order to retain the upward momentum of the PSI, he needs to keep assimilating large chunks of the party machines and voting base of rival political formations. He has looted the PCI as much as possible for the moment. On the face of it, further electoral booty can only come to Craxi from the DC.

Craxi's problem is posed thus: After having looted the PCI to a significant degree, how to perform a similar raid on the DC, so as to allow the PSI to emerge as the pillar of a 1992 regime and permanent Craxi dictatorship? Craxi's sponsors in the Ledeen wing of the CIA and among the friends of Cardinal Silvestrini think they have the answer: a self-styled "traditionalist" but actually gnostic Catholic group

called Communion and Liberation (CL). CL was founded about 30 years ago by an activist priest, Don Luigi Giussani, who is still the de facto boss of the movement. CL asserts that it is opposed to modernism, hedonism, secularism, immorality, and greed.

In reality, CL is as gnostic as Simon Magus or Tammy Faye Baker. The political arm of CL is called *People's Movement*, and it counts some 2,000 members of city councils, primarily in Lombardy, and the rest of northern Italy. CL itself claims that it controls over 1 million votes. The business arm of CL, the so-called *Compagnia delle Opere*, says it has 1500 "mini-enterprises" which provide some sort of work for up to 150,000 people, mostly young, unemployed Catholic students and university graduates put to work part time making photocopies, selling lecture notes and other clerical services.

With the ham-handed stupidity typical of a fascist like Ledeen, Craxi's backers are now attempting to wrench CL out of the DC and transfer their votes to Craxi's PSI. If this can be done, they calculate, the DC will experience a partial collapse similar to that already undergone by the PCI. If the votes can be moved into the PSI column, so much the better. If, as seems likely, CL breaks up in the course of the attempted maneuver, the dispersion of DC support will still be a boon to Craxi, who will take a giant step toward his desired coup d'état.

In Italy, as elsewhere, the postwar period, and the postwar order of things, are ending. As they end, they pose once again the question that emerged in the Vatican under Pius XII in the mid-1940s. On the one hand, Monsignor Giovanni Battista Montini, later Pope Paul VI, supported the plan of Catholic statesman Alcide de Gasperi to create a single Catholic party. Monsignor Tardini and the Segreteria di Stato opposed this idea, and went so far as to support the so-called "Catho-Communists" like Franco Rodano and Adriano Ossicini, both exponents of synarchist corporatism. Among the younger Catho-Communists of that era was Giulio Andreotti, then president of the Italian Catholic University Federation (FUCI). The young Giulio was hostile to De Gasperi's ideas until they became hegemonic, and Giulio in any case made sure the Catho-Communists got a hefty slice of the FUCI funding.

Or, perhaps a somewhat older analogy is needed. If so, it is provided by the aged philosopher Augusto Del Noce, one of the leading intellectuals associated with CL. In an article published by the newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, Del Noce established the following parallels: "Can't we say that history repeats itself? The Catholic hard-liners of long ago had already looked with favor on Mussolini, while dumping the Partito Popolare [the Catholic party of Don Luigi Sturzo]; today's hardliners seem to be doing the same thing with Craxi, preferring him to De Mita, or at least to most of the DC leadership." Del Noce admits more than he intends. Ledeen's proposed CL operation is a prelude to fascist degeneration in Italy today.