

Italy: a plebiscite against the state

by Leonardo Servadio

Months and months of scandals in Italy aimed at the corrupt political class, and in favor of institutional “change,” came to a climax on April 18, when a voter referendum passed by an overwhelming majority. Of the eight questions on the ballot, the one considered the most important will lead to a majority system (“winner take all”) for deciding elections to the Senate, instead of the proportional system that has been in place since the founding of the republic after World War II.

The change to a majority system in the Senate will have the effect of delivering the industrialized North to Umberto Bossi’s Northern League, a new party which claims that northern Italians are ethnically different from southern Italians, and is expected to begin splitting the nation into three separate entities—*de facto* if not *de jure*. The project has high-level international sponsors, notably the Freemasons.

The result of this referendum was inevitable. Never has the credibility of Italian political institutions fallen so low. When the Italian state and political system were struck by an avalanche of terrorism in the late 1970s, the institutions emerged strengthened, at least in the eyes of the Italians, since they proved able to resist the armed assault.

That was when Christian Democratic President Aldo Moro was kidnapped and murdered in early 1978, by the Red Brigades terrorist group. Moro had been attempting to organize a governing alliance between the wing of the dominant Christian Democracy (DC) that was trying to distance itself from Washington and the wing of the Communist Party (PCI) seeking independence from Moscow. The European Labor Party (POE), associated with the political movement of Lyndon LaRouche, marched through the streets of Milan and Rome with banners that read: “Kissinger Kidnapped Aldo Moro.” In fact, former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was active in efforts to destabilize Italy, and the evidence linking his activities to the kidnapping came out in court during the trial of Moro’s assassins.

Undermining the idea of the state

The scandals which originated in the widespread corruption that dominated the 1980s (the years in which a cynical consumerism took over, and Italy was transformed from a

center of an ancient culture and industrial society into the prime purveyor of “fashion” to the world’s oligarchs and yuppies), have wiped out the idea that the state is an instrument for the defense of the weak.

It is possible that the voters in the April 18 referendum did not realize it, since all the pre-referendum publicity focused on the first question, majority election to the Senate; but in three of the other eight questions, they voted against the idea of a centralized state. These questions involved the abolition of three ministries: State Holdings, Tourism, and Agriculture. Now, the jurisdiction of these ministries will be turned over to Italy’s 20 regions. In other words, the administration is beginning to be decentralized.

This closely follows the path projected by Northern League chief Bossi, who in past years had already declared that there should be direct elections, according to the majority system, for a central political administration, which should be reduced in its authority, with a wider role for the regional governments. In other words, a stronger central role for foreign and military policy, but all the rest, particularly economic policy, should be decided locally by the regions. The results of the referendum go exactly in that direction.

Decentralized economic policy

The plan seems purely utopian: How can there be a national foreign policy or military policy, if economic policy is decentralized? Yet, calls for such a policy have multiplied in recent years. For example, in a recent book by Paul Kennedy, *Preparing for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Random House, 1993), one of the central theses is that the role of the state should change, because the prevailing economic entities are the “multinationals,” capable of operating in any nation, and of changing to another nation at any moment they deem it profitable (see *EIR*, March 5, p. 47).

In the 1970s, it was more or less clear to the Italian people that this way of thinking was to be rejected. Now, it has been implicitly accepted, and the country is getting ready to place itself into the hands of the multinational empires. This resembles the way the ancient Byzantine Empire and other oriental despotisms ruled through local satraps and “ethnarchs,” who exacted tribute and slaves on behalf of the central authorities, while allowing a measure of local autonomy on the level of economic and social decisions, which merely served to divide the various subject peoples further and keep them from ever contesting the imperial power.

Not by chance, the day after the referendum, a delegation from Moody’s Investors Service was expected in Rome, to consult with many top authorities of the state and the government. Moody’s was coming to verify whether Italy is moving in the way it dictated, when it started the process of devaluation of the lira.

The referendum was supposed to be the maximum expression of democracy; but what has all this to do with democracy?