

Plot Brings Down Italian Government

by Claudio Celani

On Feb. 21, the Italian government of Prime Minister Romano Prodi was brought down by a vote in the Senate on foreign policy. The crisis only underscored the fragility of parliamentary systems which, as Lyndon LaRouche has pointed out, are a compromise resulting from the power of feudal oligarchy on the Old Continent. Just days before the government fell, on Feb. 13, LaRouche had addressed members of the Parliament in Rome, by invitation of leaders of the Partito della Rifondazione Comunista (PRC), who launched an initiative for an “interparliamentary committee for a New Bretton Woods.” The initiative came from Prof. Andrea Ricci, a young PRC Member of Parliament. Ricci’s initiative has already been joined by two undersecretaries of state in the Prodi government, Alfonso Gianni (PRC) and Antonio Lettieri (Margherita party). Lettieri attended the Feb. 13 conference with LaRouche, which took place in the prestigious Cenacolo Hall of the Italian Parliament; also participating was the parliamentary faction leader of the PRC, Gennaro Migliore (see *EIR* Feb. 23 for coverage of the event).

As LaRouche spoke in Rome, the danger of a crisis was already in the air. Politicians of both the government coalition and the opposition, whom LaRouche met privately in Rome, had warned that the Prodi government could go under as a result of a “cattle trade” involving the tiny margin of three votes the center-left coalition had in the Senate. Indeed, the collapse of the Prodi government was the result of an ambush, which had been preceded by an escalation of conflicts within the coalition, but also of heavy foreign interference.

The coalition, as *EIR* had insisted since the Prodi government’s formation in May 2006, had been a catastrophe in domestic policy, although it had implemented an effective shift in foreign policy, away from the blind support for the Bush-Cheney government that had characterized the previous government of Premier Silvio Berlusconi. Italian soldiers were pulled out of Iraq; Italy became deeply involved in the Mideast peace process, including Lebanon; and re-started an independent policy vis-à-vis India, China, and Russia. Furthermore, in a changed climate, several judicial and popular initiatives against the Bush-Cheney policies were able to develop, which the government did not pro-

mote, but also did not sabotage. For example: the trial in Milan against 26 CIA agents who kidnapped an Egyptian imam, Abu Omar, as part of the Bush-Cheney “war on terror”; and the 200,000-strong demonstration in Vicenza on Feb. 17 against plans to upgrade the U.S. military base there as a function of “21st-Century warfare” policies against Third World countries.

A Heated Political Debate

These issues were part of a heated political debate which LaRouche’s intervention in Rome intersected. Before LaRouche’s arrival, U.S. Ambassador Ronald Spogli had rallied five of his colleagues and published an unprecedented open letter in the press, urging the Italian government to “close ranks” with the military coalition in Afghanistan, where Italy has 2,000 troops. Italian Foreign Minister Massimo D’Alema answered sharply, calling this an “irregular” procedure and an external interference into the upcoming parliamentary debate.

The other central issue of the Italian political crisis concerns economic policy. Prodi’s ministers have implemented a series of budget-cutting measures, liberalizations, and privatizations, but, thanks to the opposition of the PRC and of the other “Communist” party, the PdCI, more radical reforms, such as pension privatization, have been stalled.

For these reasons, what the media call the “radical left” in the government—PRC and PdCI—were in the middle of a crossfire from a whole range of forces, from the opposition, the media, and even liberal factions among their putative allies. Several politicians from the center-left coalition exposed a plot to provoke a government crisis, and replace the “radical left” with sections of the current opposition. That explains roughly what happened on Feb. 17, with the addition of a surprise: Giulio Andreotti, the former Prime Minister and one of the most powerful politicians in Italy, who had been consistently critical of Bush-Cheney policies and supportive of D’Alema, voted against the government, thus becoming marginally decisive in provoking the crisis. How the Italian government crisis is now going to unfold from this point on is pure speculation.

In this context, LaRouche’s intervention provided a method for strengthening national unity, through a dialogue among forces which would tend to split on ideological issues, but which would respond positively if challenged at the highest cultural level, with solutions to the strategic and economic crisis based on common principles. The discussion at the Feb. 13 conference, of the 1648 Westphalia Treaty, which ended the Thirty Years War, is an example of that. Similar discussions took place in LaRouche’s private meetings with political representatives of both political blocs. This process was fertilized by the perspective of the “new policy” being implemented in Congress through the LaRouche Youth Movement, and will be continued regardless of the next, provisory political arrangement in Rome.