

Report from Italy by Liliana Gorini

Bettino Craxi's gloomy 'recovery'

Reality is that genocidal austerity is stalking the Italian economy in 1985.

A few days before Christmas, Premier Bettino Craxi called the press to Palazzo Chigi, seat of the Italian government, to announce an economic recovery in Italy, indicated by the fact that "1985 will be the year of the heavy-lira reform." The monetary reform will change the value of the Italian lira (1,000 lira banknotes will be exchanged for 1 new lira) to demonstrate that "inflation has been defeated" and that the lira can proudly face the harder currencies.

The economic reality behind these optimistic forecasts is quite different. With 6 million unemployed (according to real statistics) and youth unemployment at 25%, Italy has entered the darkest economic period since World War II. Factories are shutting down one after the other. The most authoritative economists and industrialists say this trend is lawful and will continue, and that the most advanced industrial regions, for example Lombardy, will convert to "services." The president of FIAT, Gianni Agnelli, announced that "Italian private industry will keep laying off in 1985" and proposed as an alternative to unemployment that retirement age be pushed up to 50 years—the forced retirees, he said, could take jobs in the "black economy"—in order to give jobs to young people without a labor contract and at subunion wages.

Not a word of denunciation of this shameful proposal came from Italy's trade unions, which fully supported Agnelli's idea of sending home the 50-year-old workers "to leave room for the young." Italian Treasury Minister

Goria took it up as a serious idea, proposing an "introductory job" for the young unemployed, with the justification that "it is better to earn low wages and work, than not to work at all." According to another famous economist, former Treasury Minister Nino Andreatta, youth until 28 "should have no labor contract."

Even worse is the social chaos brought on by the very heavy austerity imposed by Finance Minister Bruno Visentini. As *EIR* has reported, Visentini managed to foist onto a very reluctant Parliament a tax plan which will hit sectors such as shopkeepers and self-employed workers with heavier taxes and bankrupt them (while leaving untouched "non-workers," such as people living on ground rent, speculation, or drug trafficking). The plan had been opposed by the associations of the affected categories and by the Christian Democracy and Social Democratic Party because it introduces an anti-constitutional clause, the so-called "inductive assessments," which will pack any shopowner or self-employed worker off to pre-trial jail detention on the basis of the simple suspicion of tax evasion.

The first result of Visentini's plan was that many shops went bankrupt, because they cannot afford to pay 40% of their income to the revenue service. For the first time since the war, shops had no lights and decorations on Christmas, offering a very sad image to Italians already reeling from wage cuts. The price of meat went up by 500 liras per kilo (about 25¢ U.S.) because the finance minister decided

to put meat among the "luxury goods," and the meat producers were forced to increase the price accordingly.

At the same time, the government decided on other price increases. For example, electricity bills will be raised by 7% generally and 25% for those who consume less electricity (i.e., poor people). Medicine will go up 30%. As if this were not enough, some municipalities, like Milan, decided to reallocate funds which were supposed to go to resuscitation centers in the hospitals and allocate them instead to social centers led by sociologists, whose main activity is to brainwash their patients.

The Italian Parliament is currently discussing a proposal put forward by a Socialist parliamentarian, Loris Fortuna (formerly the lawyer of a famous drug smuggler, Pier Luigi Torri) to legalize euthanasia, leaving the decision on whether to kill a patient or not to a sort of "popular jury" as he called it, made up of psychiatrists, priests, doctors, etc. In many Italian pharmacies one now encounters leaflets advertising the AIED, the Italian association led by genocidalist Luigi De Marchi, who proposed forced sterilization to "reduce the Italian population by one-third."

All these austerity and genocidal measures aim at paying back the Italian foreign debt to the International Monetary Fund, which demanded such measures as conditions for new loans. It is telling that Finance Minister Visentini is the main accomplice of the head of the multinational Olivetti Corp., Carlo De Benedetti (with whom he worked together in Olivetti before joining the government). De Benedetti had proposed that Italy's foreign debt be paid back by dividing it up among all Italians, and forcing each to pay his share.