

Italy at Crossroads: 1924, Or LaRouche

by Claudio Celani

Italy threatens to become the first large European country to fall prey to a fascist dictatorship, similar to the one that Lyndon LaRouche has warned is looming over the United States. There is a genuine, mounting popular dissatisfaction with political institutions, which have abdicated their responsibility to serve the Common Good. The threat is that the oligarchy will manipulate the popular sentiment towards a dictatorship, as it did in the 1920s under Mussolini. Still, there is time to save the country, as a few individual leaders are responding to the leadership of Lyndon LaRouche and his Italian associates.

The days of the current Romano Prodi government are numbered. Similar to what happened with the U.S. Congress, 18 months after the center-left coalition won the elections, its popular support has collapsed enough to guarantee a large majority for the opposition, if elections were held today. The reason is that, far from improving, as per electoral promises, social conditions for most of the population have worsened. The main campaign issue is that most Italian youth cannot find a job unless they accept *precariato*, short-term, low-paid jobs, which make it impossible to pay rent, buy a house, or build a family. Today more than 4 million Italians (out of a population of 58 million) are officially part of the *precariato*. In addition, the global economic collapse is causing a social crisis with rising housing and food prices. It has been calculated that 3.6 million families—1.9 million homeowners and 1.7 million rent-payers—are having trouble making their house payments.

Demonstrations against the government have had impressive popular participation: About 1 million people marched in each of two different demonstrations against the government in Rome, one organized by the right wing, and another one by left-wing parties (the latter being part of the government coalition).

In October, more than 3 million people participated in national primaries to elect the leader of the newly born Democratic Party, an indication of a mandate for change. However, Italian citizens are once again empowering the wrong people: Democratic Party Secretary-elect Walter Veltroni, who is supposed to replace Prodi as Prime Minister sooner or later, announced that he will enforce a shock-program to cut down the debt, by selling state assets. Thus, more doses of the prescription that has already destroyed the country. Behind Veltroni's "Democratic Party" platform, lurks the oligarchy, ready with

its dictatorial option at the end of the tunnel.

The oligarchy is using the same methods used by the French Jacobins in the 1779 revolution, and by Mussolini's fascists in 1922: populism, and the discrediting of all institutions. The center of the populist manipulation is the group of "families" centered around the largest national daily, *Corriere della Sera*. The current phase of manipulation started with a book published by two *Corriere* journalists entitled *The Caste*, which describes the political class as a corrupt caste of untouchables, dedicated to wasting public money. As usual, a partial truth is used to fabricate a false totality, and the result has been that since it hit the bookstores, *The Caste* has become the number one item in all the media.

Then, last May, as the Prodi government was celebrating its first anniversary in office, one of the owners of *Corriere*, the aristocrat Luca Cordero di Montezemolo, launched a scathing attack on the government and the political class, at the annual meeting of the Industrialist Association, of which he is national chairman.

As politicians feebly tried to counter what they named as a wave of "anti-politics," a popular comedian, one Beppe Grillo, called for a national day of protest which he called "V-day," where "V" does not stand for "victory," but for the Italian equivalent of "F___ You!" (*Vaffanculo*), addressed to the political class. Grillo was able to bring 300,000 people into the street, ritually shouting "Vaff..." to a gallery of ministers, politicians, public officials, and, foremost, to the political parties themselves.

Grillo's speech was correctly likened to the one Prime Minister Benito Mussolini gave in 1924, when, on the eve of national elections, he announced the dissolution of political parties, calling them "useless," in favor of a unique list, which was called the "Listone." That was the end of parliamentary democracy. The rest is history.

Grillo may not be able to run a party and win a majority vote in the next elections, and he probably will not be the new Mussolini, but the next election might be the last one, unless the current dynamic is not reversed.

A Government on Life-Support

The Prodi government is now on life-support. On Oct. 26, Prodi's coalition lost seven successive Senate votes, before it was able to get part of its budget law approved. Several scenarios are being floated in case there is a government crisis, all involving early elections. The most radical scenario sees a "transitional" government, run by Mario Draghi, the current central bank governor. Draghi, a schoolmate of *Corriere's* Montezemolo, is a man of the financial oligarchy. He was exposed by *EIR* after he participated in the 1992 meeting on-board the British royal yacht *Britannia*, to discuss privatizations with London bankers. Since then, many have called him "Mr. Britannia."

In the 1990s, Draghi ran Italian privatizations as direc-

tor-general of the Treasury Ministry. After that, he became the European deputy chairman of Goldman Sachs. At the end of 2005, Draghi was appointed governor of the Bank of Italy, in the coup that watergated central banker Antonio Fazio, who had opposed a foreign takeover of two Italian banks. Draghi is also chairman of the Global Financial Stability Forum, the so-called “plunge protection team” which is supposed to coordinate the central banks’ response to a systemic collapse. Recently, he joined his old schoolmate Montezemolo in openly criticizing the Prodi government because, instead of using surplus tax revenues to pay the debt, Prodi had decided to redistribute those funds for social purposes.

In the face of this crisis, the Italian LaRouche movement has stated that the only way to save the institutions is to give credible signs of a policy for the Common Good. One such action would be the introduction in Italy of “firewall” legislation to protect homeowners and banks, similar to the LaRouche legislation in the United States.

Another such action would be a reversal of the anti-technological policies that have plagued the country for at least three decades. The top priority is a return to nuclear energy, a field which Italy was a continental leader in the post-war period, until the oligarchy imposed a referendum in 1986, and a shutdown of all nuclear plants. Now, Italy is 85% dependent on foreign imports for energy (including imported nuclear energy); a large-scale nuclear program would be a signal that the political class wants a change for the better.

Parliament has started a discussion on the issue, and a bill has been introduced to reduce energy dependency by 50% by the year 2020, but parliamentary procedures to achieve “consensus” have stretched out the schedule so that it will take several months before there is a compromise on when, and how, a program will be started. This is not good enough.

One politician who has realized the urgency of a shift in order to avoid dictatorship, is Giulio Tremonti, former Finance Minister and current deputy head of the Chamber of Deputies. Tremonti is a member of former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia party, which is populist and neo-con oriented, but Tremonti is a maverick with an independent mind. He has been reading LaRouche’s writings for years, and has associated himself publicly with LaRouche on the idea of the Eurasian Land-Bridge. Recently, Tremonti has shown that he has learned more than that.

Tremonti Takes on Globalization

On Oct. 23, Tremonti appeared on the popular TV talk show “Porta a Porta,” on Italian national television. He shocked all participants, host included, when he called for stopping discussion of petty issues and for addressing “those issues which are the real concern of the population: food price increases, home mortgage rises, unemployment.” Globaliza-

tion has “taken hope away” from families, Tremonti said, and he called for “going back to the system that gave us secure, stable jobs.... Once, decades ago, it was not paradise, but people had secure jobs, could pay their mortgages, and, in general, had hope for the future.... Through globalization, hope has been stolen away.”

Tremonti continued: “Those madmen introduced uncontrolled capital flows, and competition from low-wage countries [such as] China and India. And what about the euro?” The purchasing power of the euro has fallen, such that a family can no longer be sustained on the euro equivalent of what they formerly earned in liras.

The shocked host and the other guests tried to dismiss Tremonti. But the first person to speak from the audience enthusiastically endorsed Tremonti: “I recognize myself fully in the picture Mr. Tremonti gave,” saying that he and his wife earn 1,300 euro a month and cannot make it once they have paid their rising mortgage costs. “They took our hope away,” he said.

The other political representative on the show, Franco Giordano, who is secretary-general of the PRC (Communist Refoundation Party), said that he fundamentally agreed with Tremonti’s analysis of globalization. The difference is that he, as a communist, thinks that corporations also exploit the workers.

Tremonti then escalated his attacks on globalization, saying: “Those madmen have abruptly enlarged the European Union, and now they realize we are having a problem. They used food to produce gasoline, and now food prices are rising.... Those idiots, they used to come to us and say: ‘We have 10 million unemployed? It is the free market.’ Now, where is the free market when central banks intervene to rescue endangered banks?”

Tremonti then confronted the government with the fact that they have just reduced taxes for banks, “not for industries that invest, produce something, but for banks!... There is no magic wand,” Tremonti said, “but I think we should go back to the system that worked. We need to go back to a system of secure jobs. Even the Pope said that. People need secure jobs to build a family.”

Finally, in a rebuke to those who think only locally, he said, “I tell you: If we do not deal with the thing out there, the thing will deal with us!” Giordano said he fully agreed with that. The journalists and the other idiots on the show had no reply.

This episode, limited but important, shows the effect of the LaRouche leadership, and indicates that it is possible to have popular support for existing institutions, thus saving them from the threat of a dictatorship. What’s necessary, is for men and women representing those institutions to stop acting as servants of the oligarchy, and act instead like Prometheus in defense of the Common Good. The programs—the Eurasian Land-Bridge and the New Bretton Woods—are there. The time to act is now, before it is too late.