

Brits Wanted Military Coup in Italy in 1976

by Claudio Celani

Recently declassified papers in Britain document that the Foreign Office considered the option of a military coup in Italy in 1976, to prevent a government with Communist Party (PCI) participation. Ultimately, the coup option was rejected, but two years later, the architect of the participation of the PCI in the government, former Prime Minister Aldo Moro, was kidnapped and killed by the Red Brigades. That could have been “the substitute hypothesis” for the Foreign Office, historian Giuseppe De Lutiis commented to this author.

A short background: In the early 1970s, Christian Democratic (DC) leader Moro had understood that the solution to Italy’s vulnerability to external interference in its national sovereignty lay in transforming the PCI into a fully pro-West and democratic party. If that occurred, there could be no obstacles to a normal transfer of political power, as in other Western democracies, and no pretext for subjecting Italy to Anglo-American imperial politics under the pretext of anti-communism.

Moro developed therefore the strategy of “parallel convergences,” or the possibility of associating the PCI with government responsibilities, along with the DC, in a “national solidarity” cabinet. In 1974, after the failure of the Popular Front government in Chile and the Pinochet coup, PCI leader Enrico Berlinguer had already proposed a similar strategy of alliance with the DC, calling it the “Historic Compromise.” In 1976, Berlinguer broke with Moscow by publicly stating that the PCI would respect Italy’s membership in NATO.

Moro’s included aim was to defeat the right-wing forces in his own party, those responsible for having blocked the reformist potential of the center-left governments which he had promoted since 1962.

Notwithstanding the evolution of the PCI in the direction set by Moro, London and pro-British forces in Washington and other European capitals, plotted to stop Moro’s policy with all means, including a military coup. This is now documented in papers, published by the Italian daily *La Repubblica* in a two-page article on Jan. 13, which were uncovered in London archives by researcher Mario J. Cereghino. The article includes lengthy quotes from a Foreign Office policy paper, as well as from diplomatic dispatches from Rome and Paris, and minutes of a secret “four powers” meeting on the Italian case. The archives dramatically confirm the role played by London in the Italian destabilization and in the elimination

of Aldo Moro, which had been exposed by the Italian La-Rouche organization as early as 1976-78.

The planning staff of the Foreign Office issued a classified paper dated May 6, 1976, entitled “Italy and the communists: options for the West.” The headline on page 14 reads: “Action in support of a Coup d’état or other subversive action,” and below that: “For its nature, a coup d’état can lead to unpredictable developments. Nevertheless, theoretically, it could be promoted. In one way or another, it could come from right-wing forces, with the support of the army and the police. For a series of reasons, the idea of a bloodless and surgical coup, able to remove the PCI or to prevent its coming into power, could be attractive. But it is an unrealistic idea.” Such reasons are: the PCI strength in the trade union movement, the possibility of a “long and bloody” civil war, a possible intervention by the Soviet Union, and reactions by Western public opinion. Therefore, the option was rejected.

Kissinger Backed the British Plot

However, preventing the PCI from entering the government in Italy remained a high priority for British diplomatic activities, backed by Henry Kissinger’s State Department and NATO. On March 25, 1976, the British Defense Ministry wrote to their Foreign Office colleagues that an Italian government with the PCI would be a “catastrophic” event. The British ambassador to NATO, John Killick, wrote that, “the presence of communist ministers in the Italian government would lead to an immediate security problem inside the Alliance ... therefore, a net amputation is preferable to an internal paralysis.”

The British ambassador in Rome, Sir Guy Millard, wrote that a PCI participation in the government would mean “the rapid end of the free-market system.” Millard was also hostile to Aldo Moro: “Sometimes, he seems to be rather ambiguous on the Historic Compromise.”

Millard reported of his talks with a leader of the Italian Republican Party (PRI), Giovanni Spadolini, who was agitated because, he said, “Moro’s decision to consult Berlinguer before the meeting of the Council of Ministers is a serious symptom. It means that the Communists are now part of the majority.” The PRI was a pro-British party, ideologically based on Giuseppe Mazzini’s version of liberal fascism, whose members included many freemasons and bankers.

In London, Henry Kissinger warned, in a meeting with the new British Foreign Minister Antony Crosland, that for the West, reformer Berlinguer is “more dangerous than [the Leninist] Portuguese [Álvaro] Cunhal.”

On April 13, a group of specialists from the Western European Department of the Foreign Office issued a dossier whose task was to define an anti-communist operational strategy. The first part is devoted to discussing options to prevent the PCI from entering the government; the second part discusses how to remove the PCI from power. Five scenarios are mooted, from the softer “business as usual,” to “econom-

ic persuasion,” including pressures from the EU and the IMF. Option number four is entitled: “Subversive or military intervention against the PCI” and says: “This option covers a series of possibilities: from low-profile operations to the active support of democratic forces (financially or otherwise) with the aim of directing an intervention in support of a coup d’état encouraged from outside.” The pros and cons are evaluated, and, again, the option is rejected. The fifth option is “expelling Italy from NATO.” This would also be a debacle for the West, the dossier concluded.

Italian Leaders Humiliated

On June 27, 1976, at the G-7 economic summit in Puerto Rico, Italian government leaders Aldo Moro and Mariano Rumor were excluded from a closed-door meeting among U.S. President Gerald Ford, British Prime Minister James Callaghan, German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, and French President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing. In a humiliating scene, Moro and Rumor were blocked at the door of the Dorado Beach Hotel by security guards. The other four heads of government decided to organize a second, secret meeting in Paris on July 8, 1976, with Helmut Sonnenfeldt for the U.S. State Department, Yves Carnac for the French government, Gunther Van Well for the Foreign Ministry in Bonn, and Reginald Hibbert for the Foreign Office. There, they discussed strategies for Italy.

The author of *La Repubblica*’s report, journalist Filippo Ceccarelli, remarks that nowhere in the Foreign Office papers, was the phenomenon of terrorism in Italy discussed. Yet, in June 1976, the Red Brigades killed their first victim, Judge Francesco Coco. “Never, in the British papers, is there a reference to the left-wing and right-wing terrorism of that ‘season of lead.’”

Of the four British officials named in the Foreign Office papers, three of them, Hibbert, Campbell, and Killick, were members of the SOE, British intelligence, during World War II. The fourth, Sir Guy Millard, is today 90. He served as the private secretary to British Prime Minister Anthony Eden during the 1956 Suez Crisis, and took part in the secret meetings with representatives of the French government that helped plan the Suez War. He was told by Eden not to take any notes of the meetings. After the war failed, because of the U.S. opposition, Eden resigned and Millard started a diplomatic ca-



Chi ha ucciso Aldo Moro

Dossier speciale del Partito Operaio Europeo sul complotto della Corona Britannica per sovvertire la Repubblica Italiana

DOCUMENTI DEL bollettino internazionale

Lyndon LaRouches’ collaborators in Italy, the POE, issued this exposé, “Who Killed Aldo Moro,” which identified the British role behind Italian terrorism in the 1970s and ‘80s. Henry Kissinger’s threats against Moro, as testified to by his wife, were also included in the dossier.

reer. He is currently a patron of the cult called the “Venice in Peril” Fund, a.k.a. the British Committee to Save Venice, whose chairman is the Viscount of Norwick.

Author Giovanni Fasanella, who exposed the British connection in the Moro assassination in his book *The Mysterious Intermediary*, raised a series of questions on his blog on Jan. 14:

“What authorized the British government to intervene so heavily in Italy’s domestic affairs?”

“Was there a ‘British Party’ in Italy that pushed British interests?”

“Did British intelligence have connections with circles in the Italian insurgency?”

“Once the option of a right-wing coup was rejected, are we sure that the target was not pursued and achieved in another way?”

These are of course rhetorical questions, which themselves suggest the right answer. As concerns the “British Party,” the answer comes from Ambassador Campbell himself. Campbell once said, according

to an obituary published in the London *Telegraph* Sept. 10, 2007, that of all the Italian ministers he encountered, he found Francesco Cossiga to be “one of the few leading Italian politicians with a profound knowledge of English civilisation and culture.”

Cossiga, interior minister during the kidnapping and assassination of Moro, and later prime minister and State President, has indeed been the leader of the “British Party,” at least at the political level. No surprise therefore, that the aging Cossiga reacted to the coup revelations by playing them down. He wrote a letter to the newspaper *Corriere della Sera* (whose editor Paolo Mieli is the son of a World War II uniformed SOE agent), which was published with an answer by former ambassador Sergio Romano, another Anglophile, whose comment was that yes, evidence shows that the British considered supporting a coup d’état in Italy, but they rejected the option, and this demonstrates that they are democratic!

Unfortunately, Italian political circles have not reacted, so far, to the revelations from London. This is all the more regrettable, not only because this year marks the 30th anniversary of Moro’s death, but because the “British Party” is as active as ever, fueling a fascist revolution which is daily gaining ground, with the ultimate aim to overthrow the constitutional system.