

Mr Osborne

(10)
Mr Young 1/2
Mr Osborne
Mr [unclear] 1/2
Rus 4/2
Mr [unclear] 2/2
Mr [unclear] 3/2
Meinwald
Evans etc (12)
Mr 1/2

BRITISH EMBASSY
MOSCOW

WR 111

16 FEB 1982

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28 January 1982

Ref: C 021/4

N Broomfield Esq
EESD
FCO

cc Mr Amvold Rd
Minister of Staff
Defence Dept
WED
of Dept

Dear Nigel,

CONTRARY TO THE INTERESTS OF PEACE AND SOCIALISM

1. We promised in our telno 50 to let you have further comment on the Pravda attack of 24 January on the Italian Communist Party. Since then the Italians have come back strongly in Unita.
2. Differences between the PCI and CPSU have a very long history. The most recent affair was provoked by the January Plenum of the Italian Central Committee which approved two documents criticising the USSR as, in brief, a liability to both the Communist cause and the peace movement in Europe. By responding as they have in Pravda on 24 January the Russians have brought the rift, which has been building up for the past several years (see for example Michael Duncan's letter of 3 December to David Johnson), fully into the arena of public polemics. The Pravda piece in effect declared the disagreement between the two parties to be fundamental and not easy to reconcile without a complete change in the PCI's line and, presumably, its leading personalities as well. The Pravda article was, moreover, expressed in language so rough as to be hard to forgive.
3. It is easy enough to see why the ideologues of the CPSU were furious with the Italians. The Pravda piece, in summary, described the PCI as saying that:
 - (a) the Soviet model of socialism is obsolescent, has been brought into question in Poland, and has ground to a halt, offering no prospects for the future; (the latter charge already made by Reagan which to judge from Soviet press reactions touched a very raw nerve);
 - (b) NATO and Warsaw Pact policies could reasonably be put on a par;
 - (c) detente is a policy for which the countries of Western Europe are primarily responsible.

But however serious the Italian crimes, one can only wonder why the Russians should want to signal to their own people the decline in their Party's international prestige and even reveal some of the charges made by the PCI. Such things have been said before and the CPSU could have replied to the PCI with a reproachful letter or a piece in a less widely read journal like Kommunist. They could, too, have treated the issues on a less personalised and more theoretical level.



4. One reason why the Soviet response was less restrained than it might have been is probably arrogance. As the Italians have pointed out in their reply, Pravda made little attempt to argue the Soviet case but merely declared ex cathedra that the Italians had gone over to the other side because they did not support Soviet positions. The language employed was flat and lame enough to justify the basic Italian charge of ossification, and had the hallmark of a bygone age, or even century. Perhaps the Russians did not see any need to argue their case with impudent heretics like the Italians. Pravda skimmed over Poland and Afghanistan and tried to justify the Soviet line by trotting out the "real" facts of housing, educational facilities, membership of local Soviets, and even sales of Lenin's works. I should be surprised if many ordinary Italians would be impressed by these assertions and some might well be insulted by observations like the preposterous claim that there are no backward regions in the USSR.

5. Another factor may have been a compound of jumpiness after Poland and a felt need to close ranks in the face of present trouble. From the Soviet point of view, as we have remarked often enough, it is obvious what is at stake in Poland - the whole Soviet position in that country and therefore in Eastern Europe. It must seem obvious to the CPSU leadership that in such circumstances, criticism cannot be honest but must be motivated by the desire to see Soviet/Socialist power undermined. Italian criticism is all the more intolerable coming from those who ought to be standing by their comrades at a critical time. The French Communists have seen the need to help. There must be those at the top of the Soviet Party who believe the time has come to try to quarantine the Italians. The Russians, in any case, will doubtless wish to ensure discipline among the East European parties and may find it harder to do that if the Italians are seen to get away with murder. The forthcoming French Party Congress is clearly a significant factor in the timing of the Soviet attack.

6. This can, at the present stage, only be speculation. Although the attack in Pravda was furious, Zagladin told a visiting group of members of the Youth Movement of the SPD earlier this week that strong words had been used but it was not the intention to excommunicate the PCI. There was, too, a certain defensiveness about the Pravda piece which referred to the Italian platform as being "contrary on all vital points to the policy of the CPSU, the Soviet Union, the countries of the Socialist Community, the overwhelming majority of the Communist Movement and the whole of the liberation movement" (my underlining).

Yours ever

Andrew

A M Wood

CC: ROME
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WRD 0111

- 4 FEB 1982

SEARCHED	REF.
PA	Acting
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T L Richardson Esq
British Embassy
RDME

Your reference

Our reference

Date
3 February 1982

Dear Tom,

SOVIET CONDEMNATION OF THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

1. Thank you for your letter of 28 January on the above subject. I have also just seen the letter you foreshadowed (of 1 February from Michael Simpson-Orlebar to Alan Goodison) about the repercussions of this condemnation on the internal Italian political scene.
2. WED, Research Department and my own Department agree with you that "it is not yet proven that the PCI and the Soviet authorities are in full schism"; although they have been on bad terms for some time now, Soviet comment has nevertheless looked at Italian political affairs from the standpoint of the PCI. The PCI remains a member of the world Communist movement.
3. We doubt if there would be much interest in the Third World in the full Pravda/Unita texts. We have however put the first two main statements of the PCI on the imposition of martial law in Poland into our latest "Polish chronology" Brief which is now being cleared. We are also preparing a Background Brief on world reactions to martial law, which will certainly bring in the PCI. The French CP Congress may yield material for a Background Brief on the position of the main Western Communist Parties and the Soviet attitude to them.
4. Finally, in view of the importance of this question, we should be glad to have as much material as you can conveniently send us, especially since more serious divisions may develop within the PCI.
5. I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours, and to Prague, in view of the zeal with which the Czechoslovak party attacks the PCI.

Yours ever

K G MacInnes

K G MacInnes
Information Department

cc: Mr Broomfield, EESD
Mrs Colvin, Research Dept
Mr Gladstone, WED
Head of Chancery:- Moscow, Washington, Paris, Madrid, Belgrade, Bonn,
Warsaw, Prague