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ITALY:

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NEUTRALIST PCI URGES END TO "FRATRICIDAL" CONFLICT

Summary: The Italian CP has reaffirmed its neutralism in the Sino-Soviet conflict with an authoritative article by Giuseppe Boffa on the current "triangle" of bilateral negotiations between the Chinese, the Russians and the Americans. The PCI hopes for a successful outcome in all three instances. Noting, however, that no progress has been reported in the Peking talks, Boffa calls for the ending, if only gradually, of the "fratricidal" Sino-Soviet conflict.

The Italian Communist Party has reaffirmed its neutralist position in the Sino-Soviet conflict with an authoritative Unita editorial by Giuseppe Boffa, calling for "an ending, if only gradually, of the fratricidal conflict. (*)"

(*) G. Boffa, "Cina, Stati Uniti e URSS," L'Unita, 24 January 1970.

Boffa's editorial -- in which he explicitly speaks not merely for himself but for the PCI -- deals with the "triangle" of negotiations now going on: the Sino-Soviet talks in Peking on the frontier issue; the Soviet-American "SALT" talks on the limitation of strategic arms, begun in Helsinki and to be continued in Vienna; and the American-Chinese ambassadorial talks, resumed in Warsaw after a two-year lapse.

The Italian Communist Party, Boffa writes, favors all such negotiations on principle. "Negotiation is the precondition for that peaceful coexistence for which we have fought and are fighting ... We are therefore for these talks, and we are for their success." At the same time, however, "one cannot ignore the complexity and even the gravity of the political struggle which lies behind this network of conversations, the risks which are involved, and which therefore impose on us ... the need for lucidity of analysis and cautiousness of judgment." (There is no need to stress how far removed this detached, objective tone is from the comments of "loyalist" Communist parties like the PCF.)

In assessing the course of the three sets of talks, Boffa finds that most progress has been made in the initial phase of the "SALT" negotiations between the USSR and the USA: spokesmen for both sides have commented on the Helsinki sessions with "accents of hope" -- although Boffa feels that "some clouds" are gathering for the more substantial discussions in Vienna.

As for the ambassadorial talks in Warsaw, Boffa notes that Washington has been referring to them in "unusually warm" terms, but adds that there is no reason to expect any substantial change in the American positions on such "grave and decisive questions" as Formosa, Chinese entry into the United Nations and the Vietnam war.

"No Progress" in Peking Talks

His judgment on the Sino-Soviet border talks in Peking is more severe:

... no progress has been recorded -- this, although no one can ignore the fact that success, even if only partial, is the only alternative possible to very grave tension, in the long run hardly to be tolerated between two countries that have more than 5,000 kilometers of frontier in common.

Meanwhile, he continues, each side accuses the other of conspiring against it in the talks with the Americans, who for their part are trying to exploit this situation. This critical judgment does not, however, mean that the PCI is against these negotiations:

On the contrary, we must work, so far as lies in our power, for effective success, in the sense that [these talks] help to make American imperialism withdraw from the more dangerous positions -- bellicose, anti-Soviet, anti-Chinese -- which it has occupied for so many years...

To this end, however, we hold that it is indispensable to bring about the ending, if only gradually, of the fratricidal conflict between the USSR and China. Apart from our judgment, which we have always expressed with extreme frankness, on the positions of the two countries and of the parties which rule them, we labored in this direction at the Moscow conference of Communist Parties. In this spirit we welcomed the meeting between Chou En-lai and Kosygin. In this direction we must bend our efforts more than ever in the future.

Kevin Devlin