

CIA Giving \$6 Million To Italian Centrists

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The CIA has begun a greatly increased program of covert support to non-Communist political parties in Italy, it has been authoritatively learned.

CIA Director William E. Colby briefed congressional committees last month, informing them that the new program would provide \$6 million in direct support, principally for the Christian Democratic Party.

The decision to provide as much money now as has been given during the last eight years follows repeated expressions of concern by Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger that Communist participation in an Italian government could have a domino effect on France and West Germany, with serious consequences for the North Atlantic alliance.

The disclosure of the aid to Italian parties comes after the Senate voted 54 to 22 to cut off covert funds for the anti-Communist factions fighting in Angola. The U.S. role in Angola has brought increasing attacks on covert funding. While such operations must be reported to designated members of Congress, those members who are briefed are forbidden to use the information in any way.

The money to the Italian parties is being given directly, sources said. Funds are also being given indirectly to anti-Communist parties in Portugal, mostly through European Socialist parties.

The Communist Party in Italy won 33 1/2 per cent of the vote in elections in 15 of 20 regions last June 15. The Communist Party has increased its share of the vote by 1 1/2 to 2 per cent in all but one national election since 1948 when it won 20 per cent. The exception was 1958 following the Hungarian uprising.

In 1948 the United States gave the Christian Democrats, led by Alcide di Gasperi, funds to help organize for the election. That funding continued for about 20 years, informed sources said, but ended after that and other covert funding operations were disclosed by Ramparts magazine in February, 1967.

A few years later, however, direct funding to Italian center parties was resumed, in-

formed sources said, and totaled about \$6 million over the last eight years.

The current gift of \$6 million is considered by informed sources to be a major operation, but there is considerable doubt that it can be politically decisive. Immediately after World War II a lack of money caused weakness in the Italian centrist parties, sources said. Now, however, the center parties are driven by internal squabbles that money alone cannot resolve.

Last month, when he was in Europe for the meetings of NATO and the energy conference, Kissinger reportedly told Western leaders and newspaper editors that the United States is determined to do what it can to prevent Communists from joining European coalition governments.

In keeping with this policy, the United States at first told Sergio Segre, a member of the Italian parliament and the Communist Party's chief international affairs expert, that he could not have a visa to the United States. Some time later, Segre did get a visa and visited the Air Force Academy and the North American Air Defense Command early warning installation at Colorado Springs.

The original denial of a visa to Segre embarrassed American officials in Rome when the Italian neo-Fascist party announced that its leader, Giorgio Almirante, had been received by two staff members of the National Security Council as well as some senators when he visited Washington last fall.

Almirante was a Fascist leader in Benito Mussolini's last government in northern Italy toward the end of World War II.

Italian Communist Party leader Enrico Berlinguer and French Communist Party chief Georges Marchais signed an agreement last November pledging not to attempt to achieve power by force, but to seek to win elections. The Italian Communist Party is the largest in Western Europe.

When Kissinger expressed concern about Communist participation in Western governments he reportedly was reminded that the independence of Western Communist parties is an irritant to Moscow.