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**ITALY: DON ENRICO BIDS FOR POWER**

"The question is not whether the Communists should come to power, but whether the domination of the Christian Democrats and their suffocating power system, which has wrought so much damage and brought Italy to such disorder and poor government, is any longer tolerable. "

—Enrico Berlinguer at a rally in Cosenza

"This is the most important test we Christian Democrats have faced since 1948. The basic question is whether the country will be led by us or by the Communists."

—Aldo Moro, campaigning at Canosa di Puglia

Up and down Italy last week, from the earthquake-shattered Alpine foothills of Friuli in the north to the fields of Calabria and Puglia in the south, already burning under the summer sun, an estimated 41 million voters were involved in a national election that may be the most crucial in the country's history. It was not only the Italians who were deeply concerned about the outcome. In the capitals of Western Europe, in Washington and Moscow, politicians and diplomats were anxiously waiting to learn what the voters will decide when they line up at the polls on June 20 and 21. Reason: the central and overriding issue of the campaign—crucial not just for Italy but for all of Western Europe—is whether or not the huge, superbly organized Communist Party, led by Enrico Berlinguer, will finally come to a share in power after nearly 30 years in opposition. In the wake of World War II, Italy's Communists —then led by the late Palmiro Togliatti —were turned back. But now once again a Red threat looms over Italy, although it is a very different Communist Party that is bidding to enter the government. Just how different is the big question.

The competing parties were doing their best to make the voters aware of the election's importance. Almost every inch of available wall space last week had been plastered with posters proclaiming the slogans and accomplishments of rival candidates, accompanied by a blitz of campaign ads and appeals. In all, the parties will have spent an estimated \$20 million by the time the voters finally decide an election that no one wanted in the first place.

President Giovanni Leone was forced to call the election a year ahead of schedule—the statutory term for a Parliament is five years—since the country's imperfect governmental system had once again worked imperfectly. The latest patchwork Christian Democratic government, headed by Premier Aldo Moro, finally collapsed last month after the Socialist Party withdrew its necessary support. Leone had no choice but to let the voters make a fresh choice, under a parliamentary system that in 30 years has produced nearly 40 revolving-door governments.

In most of the previous postwar elections it could be safely assumed that the Christian Democrats would gain the largest individual share of the vote, with the Communists coming in a distant but looming second. No longer. In regional elections last June, the Communists gained 33% of the vote—only two points less than the Christian Democrats. Either alone or in coalition with other leftist groups, they gained control of such strategic cities as Turin, Florence and Naples; there and elsewhere they have on the whole provided effective and honest local government.

Although regional elections are not comparable to national ones and the Christian Democrats usually do better in national votes, the Communists hope to improve on the 33% they won last year. This is far from certain. The latest poll published by Rome's pro-Socialist daily *La Repubblica* showed Christian Democrats gaining by a percentage point, to put them three points beyond the Communists. Berlinguer, in a perhaps deliberately gloomy assessment last week, agreed with the trend.

Still, the prospects were never better for the so-called "historic compromise," a power-sharing between Communists, Catholics and Socialists that Party Secretary Berlinguer proposed in 1973. Although nine parties in all are fighting for parliamentary seats—they range from the neo-Fascist Movimento Sociale Italiano on the far right to the new and strident Proletarian Democrats on the extreme left—the five-week election campaign at its midpoint has narrowed down to a two-party race.

The Christian Democrats, led by Aldo Moro, 59, the perennially worried-looking five-time Premier, have the dubious advantage of incumbency. Alone or in coalitions, the Partito Democrazia Cristiana has dominated Italian politics since the end of World War II—to the point that some weary party leaders complain of being "doomed to govern." In the past, the D.C. has often won national elections because middle-class Italian voters who marked the hammer-and-sickle Communist emblem on ballots in local

elections as a protest were too afraid to let the Communists come to power when it really mattered.

This time, however, the D.C. is being challenged as never before. The very success of the party in transforming Italy into a modern industrial country has raised expectations that it has not been able to fulfill, especially in the recent enduring recession. Moreover, D.C. governments have lately proved unable to solve a host of economic and social problems: rampant inflation, a sagging lira, mounting national debt, 7% unemployment, inadequate transportation, hospital care and public housing. The party has a tarnished record of providing bad government by aging politicians. The Partito Comunista Italiano has mounted its most serious challenge so far under Berlinguer, the most talked-about politician in Italy at the moment, and perhaps in all of Europe.

The scion of petty aristocrats on Sardinia whose roots go back to that island's Spanish past, Berlinguer, 54, has been Secretary of the P.C.I. since 1972. He has created a new image for the West's biggest Communist Party—that of hardworking, button-down Communists who in no way represent a revolutionary threat to bourgeois voters. The basic election issue is whether the voters will accept this new respectable image. Ironically, the once ideologically passionate Communists are campaigning in the name of efficiency and good government, while the Christian Democrats (at least to some extent the party of the efficient capitalists) are campaigning on ideology and faith.

Visiting Moscow last winter for the 25th congress of the Soviet Communist party, Berlinguer took the podium to deliver an independence speech that left his stony-faced Russian hosts sitting on their hands. He demanded "a road to socialism that corresponds to the peculiar characteristics of the historical, civil and political development of our country." In public speeches and private interviews (see box), Berlinguer has promised that the Communists, if allowed to share power, would continue the Italian role in NATO and the Common Market. On the key question for democratic Europeans, whether the Communists, if defeated, would give up power democratically, Berlinguer insists that they would. He insists also that a Communist victory in Italy would not necessarily have a domino effect elsewhere in Europe. Berlinguer and other soft-liners in the Italian party sometimes seem and sound not at all like Communists but like closet socialists. Indeed, apart from their ongoing link with Moscow, they have a hard time explaining in what way they are still Communists if all their democratic assurances are true.

More and more people—not only in Italy but throughout Western Europe—are convinced that the Communists are sincere in their democratic protestations. Others, though, continue to be suspicious of Berlinguer, despite their admiration for his personal qualities. They remember Lenin's cynical observation about capitalists who are (or were) so naive that they would eagerly sell the rope with which they would be hung. But even some of those who accept Communist sincerity also recall the Prague Spring, and wonder how long a Communist Party in power in Italy could survive if Moscow disagreed with its programs.

Some foreign observers have argued that a liberal "Eurocommunism" is a major threat to Soviet hegemony and that it would actually be a defeat for the Kremlin if Berlinguer won; it would prove, according to this theory, that the only way a Communist Party could attain power in a democracy is by adhering to Western political ideals. That might well be the case, but it remains unknown what kind of pressure the Soviet Union might still be able to exert on its wayward ally, and also what kind of pressure Berlinguer might have to face from his hard-lining Moscow-oriented comrades within the party. Campaign promises, as Italian voters have reason to know, are not written in stone.

Beyond that, there is the problem that the Communists themselves may not know how to cope with the conflicting priorities and decisions they presumably would face, even if they entered some form of "unity government" holding at the outset, at least, only minor Cabinet portfolios. They have been evasive on foreign policy in general. The other members of the EEC and the Atlantic Alliance have potential threats and political weapons held over Italy's head; other Communist parties in Europe—both East and West—have weapons of their own that they might use against Berlinguer. The conflict might thus lead Italy into a kind of neutralism that would be neuterism as well.

Many people in Western Europe—and the U.S.—have strong doubts about how long the party's independence from Moscow will last. They also fear that a triumph for the Communists in Italy would indeed have an impact on other countries—most notably France, where the party headed by Georges Marchais shares a Programme Commun with François Mitterrand's Socialists. Together, the two leftist parties gained more than 49% of the vote in the 1974 presidential elections. Others, however, believe that an Italian Communist success would only produce right-wing backlash in France.

Concern over an Italian-led Euro-Communist axis surged last week when Berlinguer interrupted his campaigning at home for a two-day visit to Paris which the Communist daily L 'Humanité heralded as "historique!" As Marchais's guest, the Italian leader once more proved that he is a campaigner to be reckoned with: his 47-minute speech in barely accented French to a rally of 70,000 Gallic comrades was a tour de force. Marchais for an hour had delivered a predictable tirade damning such enemies of the right as French President Giscard d'Estaing and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Berlinguer's address was a well-constructed appeal for a "different socialism."

Such performances have turned Enrico Berlinguer into Italy's new political star (and according to one survey, also its most sexy, in the view of Italian women). Yet, like his party, the slight, shy, introspective Berlinguer is riddled with typically European paradoxes. He is a thorough Marxist theoretician who has devoted his life to the party since he was a teenager. Yet this leader of the proletariat is customarily addressed by fellow Sardinians on vacation trips home as "Don Enrico" because of the family's prestige. As

a Communist and atheist, Berlinguer ought to be a rigorous enemy of the powerful Italian Catholic Church. His wife Letizia is a practicing Catholic, and Berlinguer himself has consistently sought an understanding with the Vatican. Although he has fashioned the P.C.I. into Italy's most vibrant political party, Berlinguer himself is quiet and withdrawn. "He's a good comrade," a fellow party leader once quipped, "but not very comradely."

Abnormally reclusive in spite of his rapid rise to political prominence, Berlinguer seldom talks about himself. On the rare occasions when he does, it can be illuminating. Once he admitted that "as a boy, I was always a rebel. I protested—to use a word that's in style now —over everything. Religion, the state, the clichés people used, and social customs. I had read Bakunin and believed myself an anarchist."

In Sassari (pop. 100,000), where Berlinguer grew up, one of his teachers recalls that "he was a very mediocre student, but he had a good mind." The young Enrico was a voracious reader who spent much time in his Uncle Ettore's library; it was there that, among other things, he discovered Karl Marx. His family also had a radical tradition; the Berlinguers, like many other Sardinian landowners, had been squeezed by industrialization and became ardent progressives as a result. Continuing the tradition, Enrico and Younger Brother Giovanni, now 51 and a Communist Deputy, haunted a Sassari café favored by old-line Communist and Socialist workers, playing an Italian version of poker called "Il Ramino" with them and arguing politics. Says one of the café habitués proudly: "If today he has lucid ideas, it's because he spent hours talking to humble people like us. Politically, we made him."

During World War II the young Berlinguer became the secretary of Sassari's Young Communist League, was arrested for taking part in food riots and freed after a hundred days in jail. He soon moved to Rome to work in the party's headquarters there and became a protégé of Togliatti. By the age of 23, Berlinguer had won a seat on the party's central committee and been tabbed as a comer; after that, he gradually worked his way to the top until he succeeded Togliatti's successor, the aging and ill Luigi Longo, in 1972. Unlike Togliatti, who lived openly with a mistress, Berlinguer fits the classic Italian middle-class image of a good family man with three children whom he zealously guards from publicity.

One reason for Berlinguer's withdrawn and austere manner is that he is determined to avoid the growth of a personality cult around the man who could conceivably become Western Europe's first postwar Communist Premier. In fact, though, such a cult is growing as Berlinguer drives up and down Italy in a chauffeured Fiat, making major campaign appearances. Berlinguer himself is a shoo-in for the Chamber of Deputies; taking advantage of a curious election law, he is a candidate in three places: Rome, Venice and the mountain town of Avezzano in Abruzzi. Should he win all three, he would choose one —probably Rome —and pass on the remaining two to other Communists. Berlinguer, who becomes a magnetic orator on the

campaign trail, is using his notoriety to flail Christian Democrats "who have enjoyed and enjoy enormous positions of power and have used it not to renew Italy, not to work for justice but to fleece Italy." He can turn out crowds of 30,000 or more even in the heavily Christian Democratic south. Even some non-Communists are so moved by his charm and reasonableness that they rush to the podium to shake hands. For the good of the party, Berlinguer has conquered his distaste for applause and has even become an accomplished if reluctant flesh-presser.

Berlinguer is backed up by a smooth-running, well-financed political organization. Already, in the current campaign, the P.C.I., has grabbed the initiative. The Communists were first out with a platform and a list of candidates, including six well-known Catholic laymen (TIME, May 31), a ploy that stunned the Vatican. For voters who care, there is a 63-page pamphlet explaining Berlinguer's call for a multiparty government of "democratic unity." The Communists have also produced leaflets and filmstrips on specialized subjects ranging from women's rights to the plight of Italian fishermen.

Particularly among younger voters, such efficiency and reasonableness appear to pay off. In the South Italian town of Ruvo last week, unemployed Salvatore Lobosco, 25, listened to campaign speakers and announced: "This is my first vote, and I'm going to vote Communist because there aren't any jobs." In the nearby Pugliese town of Bitonto, Marialina Fiorello, 21, daughter of a long line of Christian Democrats, announced that she too intended to vote P.C.I., "to change the government and make the economy healthy again."

Against such heavy artillery, the Christian Democrats have had a hard time getting the offensive. The D.C., as the campaign reaches its climax, is less concerned about defending its own record than it is in denouncing the Communists as a dangerous threat to Italian liberty, despite Berlinguer's persuasiveness. The Christian Democratic campaign is countering the single Communist leader with a triumvirate of leaders, led by the silver-haired Moro.

Moro was joined on the campaign trail by Party Secretary Benigno Zaccagnini, 64, who last week was felled by a prostate attack in Bologna. In a party that had been plagued by ineptitude and corruption, Zaccagnini, despite his age, had been billed as a fresh face and a genuine "Mr. Clean": his picture is on most D.C. campaign posters, along with the party's slogan: "The New D.C. has already begun." Speaking in Bologna last week before his attack, Mr. Clean admitted that the Communists had gone through "a significant evolution during the past ten years." But, he added, their party "is not mature enough to govern; its labored path to democracy still has a long way." Without Zaccagnini, the Christian Democrats could find it difficult to hold younger, restless voters on the party's left.\*

The third member of the Christian Democratic team, feisty former Premier Amintore Fanfani, 68, seldom

makes such admissions. Fanfani's assignment is to raise the specter of fear over a Communist approach to power. At Grosseto and again at Benevento, he intimated that the party should have been outlawed: "Communism has always taken advantage of liberty to crush it once power is achieved—and it might have been better if we had not allowed them to take that road." In that way, the Christian Democrats hope to pick up votes from supporters of such smaller parties as the Liberals and Social Democrats, and particularly the despised neoFascists. They received unexpected help in that approach recently when a neo-Fascist politician allegedly shot and killed a 25-year-old Communist heckler at an M.S.I. rally in Sezze. Fanfani blamed the shooting not only on Fascism but on rising Communist influence as well, thereby managing to damn two enemies with one tirade.

Moro and his Christian Democrats have lately received help from an expected—but in some measure unwelcome—source. For the first time since the days when Alcide de Gasperi was the D.C. leader and autocratic Pope Pius XII threatened to excommunicate all Italians who voted Communist, the Vatican is taking a more overt part in an Italian campaign. Addressing a national conference of bishops last month, Pope Paul VI used the personal pronoun I instead of the pontifical we to stress his interest in the election. He obliquely exhorted Catholic voters to remain united behind the traditional Catholic party. At a weekly audience, Paul used Christ's post-resurrection words to his apostles, "Remain, remain in my love"—a not terribly subtle appeal to Italian voters to vote their Christian principles, meaning the Christian Democrats.

Both Pope Paul and the D.C. recognize that in an increasingly secularized and anticlerical Italy—where divorce and abortion have been burning issues—too much Vatican interference could backfire. Moro himself has made no mention of the papal support, preferring to deliver his own moral appeals: "What divides us from the Communists? You know. It is our conception of man and our Christian belief, which is an important part of our heritage."

Nevertheless, the church in recent weeks has quietly begun to provide political support for the Christian Democrats. Catholic Action, the lay organization that in Pius' time was the Pope's election spearhead, is now a moribund organization of only 600,000 people; nonetheless, nearly 5 million lay Catholics in Italy have been mounting a well-orchestrated word-of-mouth appeal against voting Communist. The Communists complained that some D.C. workers go so far as to mark sample ballots for householders and warn them, "If you vote Communist, it may be the last time you get a chance to vote at all." In the still largely religious south of Italy, parish priests may turn out to be the

Pope's best weapons. So far, few have delivered direct pulpit orders to their flocks to vote D.C., as many did in Pius' day. But as Franco Sasso, a parish priest in the southern town of Molfetta, indicated last week to TIME Correspondent Erik Amfitheatrof, he would quietly remind parishioners, "When you make your choice, you must be consistent with your faith."

Among less sophisticated Italians, at least, the Christian Democrats are also gathering timely support based mostly on voter naïveté. Flyers have been distributed in rural areas which show the Italian peninsula chained and padlocked, while neighboring Yugoslavia has been replaced by a menacing Soviet tank. "It's a one-way street," says the poster of a vote for the Communists. In the south, meanwhile, where large numbers of people have emigrated over the years, rumors are flying that the U.S. will retaliate for a pro-Communist vote by expelling all Italian-Americans.

Washington is not that vengeful, of course, but for more than a year Secretary of State Kissinger has warned, Cassandra-fashion, of the consequences of a Communist role in government. Argues Kissinger: "It is difficult to see how we could continue to have NATO discussions if various Communist parties achieve control of Western European governments." Kissinger has stated his opposition to a "historic compromise" so often and so vigorously—most recently he was ruled out of order at a NATO meeting in Oslo for bringing up the matter—that some Europeans accuse him of interference in internal Italian affairs.

Others support the view of Journalist Alberto Ronchey of Milan's *Corriere della Sera*. Ronchey, who is a Republican Party candidate, noted during a symposium on Italian Communism sponsored by TIME: "I think everybody in Italy understands that Kissinger had to speak out. If he had kept silent, it would have been interpreted as acceptance of the Communists in government. Beyond that, it is necessary to avoid the impression that the U.S. wants an economic war with an Italian government with Communist participation."

Washington largely agrees with that interpretation. "We do not want to be seen as endorsing a historic compromise," one State Department official told TIME last week. "Perhaps we needed to use verbal overkill to stay neutral, but now it is up to the Italians to arrange these matters." Additionally, the U.S. would prefer not to provide the Communists with new opportunities in a campaign in which CIA payoffs and Lockheed bribes have already figured. Last week, when D.C. Secretary Zaccagnini spoke in Bologna, he was greeted by hecklers carrying an oversized model of a Lockheed airplane through the central square where the rally took place. The pilot of the plane was pictured as President Leone, a D.C. politician who has been fingered by unsubstantiated leaks and rumors as a Lockheed bribe taker in exchange for Italian air force orders.

Berlinguer himself in stump speeches has taken crafty advantage of the U.S. presidential election to make a point about U.S. interest in the Italian campaign. He notes that Idaho Senator Frank Church, in his campaigning for the presidency, has suggested that an accommodation could be reached between Washington and the P.C.I. Berlinguer identifies Church as the man who uncovered both the CIA payoffs and the Lockheed bribes—"in other words, a man who knows his chickens and a man who knows, as we know them, those voracious Christian Democratic chickens, who were given money by the CIA and

Lockheed and the oil companies."

As the Italian campaign nears its climax and charges and countercharges fly, a Western diplomat observed in Rome last week: "It's almost as though the parties have forgotten that they're going to have to form some sort of government after the election." What kind they form will be determined when the votes are all counted next week.

There are three key choices, each of which depends not only on Communist returns but on how well the third-ranked Socialist Party does at the polls. In last year's regional elections, where Communists outran the predictions of pre-election polls, the P.C.I. got 33% of the vote and the Socialists 12%, up from 27% and 10%. If the two parties make further gains this time and achieve an absolute majority of 51%, they have indicated that they would invite other parties, except the neoFascists, to join in a "grand coalition." If the Christian Democrats were to refuse such an offer, the two leftist parties alone might then organize a Popular Front of the combined left, even though some Socialists believe that the time is not yet ripe in Italy for what they call the "left alternative."

If the Communists and Socialists score well but fall short of an absolute majority, on the other hand, the Christian Democrats would be in the swing position. To them would fall the fateful decision of whether or not to accept the historic compromise and invite the Communists to join in a government in which they would for the first time hold Cabinet portfolios. Such a decision is certain to produce a trauma that could even shatter the already factionalized Christian Democratic Party. Some observers foresee a different kind of compromesso storico, in which the participants would be Communists, Socialists and a breakaway, power-oriented wing of the D.C.

A third, more likely alternative is a government center-left by inclination—but not by formal designation—in which Socialists and Christian Democrats would participate with only parliamentary support from the Communists. Depending on whether they slipped this time from the D.C. total of 38.8% in the last national election, Christian Democrats might even be persuaded to surrender the premiership in such a coalition to a Socialist or a representative of one of the smaller, noncontroversial Italian parties. Although Berlinguer has insisted that the Communists no longer choose to be "water bearers" in government decisions, many Italian observers consider that for the time being they might be content with an indirect role in such "un pasticcio all' Italiana," or Italian pastry, as one politician dubbed such a coalition.

The choice among governments depends upon the voters, particularly those who in the past have marked Communist ballots to vent their irritation over the Christian Democrats. How they decide will have a large effect not only on Italian politics but on Western Europe as well. "What it all comes down to," said one

State Department Italy-watcher last week, "is whether they're more scared of the Communists than they are disgusted with the Christian Democrats." With the rest of the West, Washington can hardly wait to find out.

\* Voters 18 years old and over are eligible to vote for 630 seats in the Chamber of Deputies. But under Italian law, only 35 million of the 41 million total—those 25 years old or more—can vote for 315 seats in the Senate. The difference could create a political split between houses, since younger voters tend to be more radical.

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