

Italian elections: Cossiga finished?

by Vivian Freyre Zoakos

The highly disputed national Italian administrative elections of June 8-9 ended without providing the results hoped for by the ruling government coalition of Christian Democrats and Socialists led by Prime Minister Francesco Cossiga. Primarily these can be summed up in two points: neither did the Communists continue the downward slide at the polls that had plagued them since 1976, nor did the Socialist coalition partners show a dramatic increase in popularity despite strenuous back-room dealing.

Among Cossiga's backers who must have shared his disappointment is President Carter. Carter had personally intervened in the Christian Democratic conference of last February to throw American muscle behind Cossiga in a close race with the other contender for the premiership, Giulio Andreotti. The hope of Carter and other cothinkers such as the American Ambassador to Rome Richard Gardner—who is intermarried with the Venetian black nobility—centered on a major defeat for the Communist Party. Such a defeat would have inevitably set into motion inside the CP a process of opposition to the policies of its general secretary, Enrico Berlinguer, which would have soon ended with Berlinguer's removal from power.

Enrico Berlinguer is the primary tactical ally of Giulio Andreotti, Cossiga's leading factional opponent within the Christian Democracy. An end to Berlinguer would soon finish the political aspirations of Andreotti.

Carter's violent opposition to the latter can be understood when one considers that Andreotti is the acknowledged closest ally of West Germany and France inside Italy, sharing these countries' commitment to a policy of East-West cooperation and a revamped monetary system backed by gold.

In fact the Communist vote dropped by a mere .3 percent relative to the 1979 elections. The drop in votes came from the south, traditionally not a Communist stronghold. But in the center and north, the areas of historically core labor support for the CP, the Communist vote held steady. This was a definite reversal of the trend which saw the CP lose votes consistently ever since

the all-time highs of the 1975 and 1976 elections. The PCI thus remains the second largest party with 31.7 percent of the total vote, only 4.8 percent lower than the ruling Christian Democrats. It is now being widely acknowledged among press and insider political spokesmen that Berlinguer's position and his policy of alliance with the Andreotti layers will not be challenged.

The Socialists, Premier Cossiga's coalition partners, recovered .7 percent of the vote relative to 1975 and 2.7 percent with respect to 1979, leaving them with a 12.7 percent total. But even these figures are deceptive.

The Radical Party, Italy's infamous libertarians and founders of the Italian gay rights and environmentalist movements, deferred from running in these elections, instead making a deal with the Socialists. In exchange for Socialist support of their causes, the Radicals pledged their vote to the Socialist Party. In 1979, the combined tally of Socialist and Radical votes was 13.4 percent—a full .7 percent higher than the Socialists received this past weekend. Hence either the Radicals' constituency refused to vote Socialist or, more likely, there was a dramatic drop in the Socialist vote which was only partially made up by the Radicals' throwing their weight behind them.

The Christian Democrats went down from 38.1 percent in 1979 to 36.7 percent last weekend. This figure however is seldom cited in the press, including the international press which has generally supported Cossiga. What is typically only mentioned is that in comparison with 1975, when the Christian Democrats had slipped to a poor 35.2 percent, they have now made a recovery of 1.5 percent.

But the real significance of these elections must be sought behind the simple arithmetic of vote tallies. As the June 8 issue of the widely circulated magazine *l'Espresso* noted, the elections took place at a time when for the first time in the history of the Italian republic both the Prime Minister and the number two man of the Christian Democrats were facing serious criminal accusations.

Christian Democratic vice president Carlo Donat Cattin, who had played a key role in Cossiga's victory

over Andreotti at the party congress, was brought before the Parliament's Commission of Enquiry in May to answer charges that he had been complicit in aiding a known terrorist to escape the police. The individual in question was Donat Cattin's own son Marco, a prominent member of the Prima Linea terrorist gang and wanted for complicity in the 1978 kidnapping and murder of Aldo Moro, former Prime Minister and soon-to-be President of the Republic.

Furthermore, Premier Cossiga himself was named by a captured terrorist and close friend of the young Donat Cattin as the individual who abused his position to tip off Senator Donat Cattin that the police were closing in on his son. Cossiga is also accused by the same witness of having promised the Senator that he would do the utmost within his governmental powers to keep secret the deunciations made against Marco Donat Cattin as a terrorist leader.

In May, when Senator Donat Cattin was brought before the Parliamentary commission, he attempted to cover for Cossiga by putting out first one then another story as to how he learned that his son was being sought by the police. Eventually he broke down and began crying before the commissioners. The decision was then made by Cossiga and his allies in the Christian Democracy to make Donat Cattin the "fall guy", forcing him to resign his position as party vice president. At the same time Cossiga himself was brought before the Parliamentary commission so that they might decide whether sufficient evidence existed to put the prime minister through a formal impeachment proceeding. By a narrow margin, the commission absolved Cossiga. Not surprisingly, the vote split directly along party lines, with the Socialist and Christian Democratic commissioners absolving Cossiga. Their combined vote meant a majority.

It was fervently hoped at this time that the issue would be dropped and, with Donat Cattin sacrificed, the Cossiga government would be allowed to continue unmolested.

But the Communist Party under Berlinguer's direction refused to let the matter drop. The Communists announced that they would circulate a petition in Parliament to force impeachment proceedings to take place. For this to succeed 318 signatures are necessary, a figure easy for the PCI to meet.

Days after this announcement the election began. It is notable that Berlinguer's Christian Democratic ally, Giulio Andreotti, waited until the last possible moment before making a brief statement to the effect that the government should not be attacked in a period of international crisis. The Communists meanwhile focused its electoral campaign not against the Christian Democratic Party as such, but against Cossiga and his cronies. While the CP used the terrorist issue vigorously in the cam-

paign, they also broadened it to focus on the overall policies of the Cossiga administration, particularly in the area of foreign policy. Cossiga had in fact become, next to British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the strongest supporter of President Carter's war-mongering policies in Europe. The Communists thus called for a return to progressive leadership within the ruling Christian Democrats, with the example of France and West Germany in foreign policy looming in the background. Italy, under Cossiga, had withdrawn itself from Europe to become instead the sole proponent on the continent of the extraordinarily dangerous doctrines of the American administration.

Because the vote was inconclusive in most ways, it is difficult to make easy predictions about the immediate future. If, for example, the Christian Democrats had lost heavily this would have been interpreted as a clear condemnation of Cossiga thus forcing his resignation. If the Communists had lost heavily, this would have been read as a definite attack on the Berlinguer leadership and possibly other CPers closer to the views of Cossiga would have emerged in the foreground. It is hardly worthwhile to speculate on a large Socialist victory, since the likelihood of such a situation was nil.

While Cossiga has been accused of helping a terrorist escape, the Socialist Party for the past year has been linked to the leading terrorist controllers of Italy and discredited among all but the hard core that makes up its permanent constituency plus the lumpenized and degenerate strata behind the Radicals. In point of fact, most of the Socialist Party leadership, and especially those now holding portfolios in the Cossiga coalition government, have the most unsavory connections to the "black nobility," to the "black nobility" intelligence service called the Jesuit Order by those who prefer to name it according to its church-cover, and to all that accompanies the "black nobility" and the Jesuits—drug-running, terrorism, assassination and political destabilization. Thus, no one knowing the truth of these matters was the least bit surprised to find one of the architects of this government, Donat Cattin, protecting a political assassin within his own family.

The Communists had vowed before the voting began to carry through with their impeachment of Cossiga when the elections had ended. If they do indeed follow through on this, with the background support of Andreotti and his allies among the carabinieri and anti-terror magistracy, they can collapse the government, discredit the allies of the Prime Minister, and help to reopen the channels for an eventual return to power of Giulio Andreotti or another member of his circles. The issue then is one of political dirigism, not arithmetic. And the future of Europe could depend on what these forces decide to do.