

THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY

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The Communist party (PCI) still commands the support of about one in every four Italian voters, many of whom vote for the Communists as a means of protest against the government. The improvement since World War II in Italy's standard of living has not overcome the maldistribution of wealth and unemployment which the Communists exploit. The Communists have also profited from the instability of Italian cabinets in recent years and from the government's failure to reflect in any considerable measure the voting trends to the left.

The party's immediate aim is to block the threat of political isolation implicit in attempts by its former supporter, Socialist leader Pietro Nenni, to bring his party into an alliance with the center parties.

Since Giuseppe Saragat split the Socialists in 1947

ITALY: COMMUNIST AND SOCIALIST SHARE OF VOTE

	(IN PERCENT)				
	CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY 1946	CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES		LOCAL PROVINCIAL COUNCILS 1960	
	1948	1953	1958		
COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI)	19.0	31.0	22.6	22.7	24.5
SOCIALIST PARTY (PSI)*	20.7		12.7	14.2	14.4

*In 1947, Giuseppe Saragat split with Pietro Nenni's PSI and later formed the Democratic Socialist party (PSDI).

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the Communists have been the second-largest political element in Italy. They have improved their voting percentages steadily despite adverse foreign and domestic developments. Their electoral success is particularly remarkable because it has been accompanied by a fall-off in the strength of the party's labor arm and the defection of Pietro Nenni, leader of the Italian Socialist party.

Present Standing

Communist party membership claims have declined from 2,000,000 in 1954 to less than 1,800,000 in 1958-60. Some estimates put it as low as 1,400,000 as of April 1960. The Communist party vote has consistently been strong in central and northern Italy, and in the late 1960s the party expanded its efforts in the south. In the nationwide voting for provincial councils last year, however, the south showed a loss of about one percent despite a slight national gain for the Communists over 1958. Although there was some retrenchment in its press program during the slump following the Hungarian revolution, the party's daily Unita maintains a circulation comparable to that of Italy's largest independent newspaper.

The Communist-dominated General Labor Confederation (CGIL) has more members than Italy's two major free unions combined, and the number of CGIL offices manned by Communists is far out of proportion to the number of Communists among about

1,500,000 members. In shop steward elections, nearly 50 percent of industrial labor supports the CGIL candidates; however, these include Socialists as well as Communists.

Like the other parties, the Communists in recent years have had difficulty in recruiting youths; the Communist youth federation, the FGCI, has declined in membership from

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450,000 in 1954 to 200,000 in 1960. The women's group, the UDI, has also fallen off. Joint Socialist-Communist organizations such as the "Committee for Rebirth of the South" have been abandoned by the Socialists and have largely collapsed, although the Socialists continue to participate in important organizations such as the CGIL and the national association of resistance fighters (ANPI), as well as in consumer and other cooperatives that are dominated by the Communists.

At the same time an influx of postwar Communists into the PCI central committee and as officers of provincial party federations has reduced the organization's dynamism by bringing in persons without experience of party discipline under stress. It can be expected to result in fractionalization over controversial issues such as Moscow's policies, the party's handling of the Nenni Socialist defection, and Communist cooperation with rightists--as occurred in the Sicilian regional government.



TOGLIATTI



LONGO

Prominent Communist deputy Giancarlo Pajetta is reported to have become involved during the past two weeks in an intra-party disagreement regarding relations with Nenni. A member of the party directorate, Pajetta had been mentioned as a possibility to succeed party Secretary Palmiro Togliatti--now 68--although he does not appear to have the necessary party-wide support.

Giorgio Amendola, also a deputy of and directorate member, might be a successor preferred as having a more flexible approach than Pajetta and better past relations with Nenni, although in recent years Nenni and Amendola have carried on

bitter polemics. Togliatti's deputy, Luigi Longo, a hero of the anti-Fascist resistance and more blindly responsive to Moscow than is Togliatti, is perhaps more often mentioned as a possible successor. Should the Soviets revert to the hard line, deputy Pietro Secchia, a hard-core revolutionary, might emerge as a contender.

Thus far Togliatti has successfully

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AMENDOLA



PAJETTA

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played off potential rivals, and his eventual successor may be a dark horse.

Sources of Weakness

Once it had lost its bid for political power in the immediate postwar years, the PCI had to work under increasingly difficult conditions. Italy's economic situation improved; the party was obliged to adhere to the unpopular Soviet cold-war line; and financial contributions from Moscow were declining.

The situation was aggravated by the line taken by Khrushchev's policy at the Soviet party congress in 1956. The Italian party was disrupted and disoriented and lost such prominent and capable members as Antonio Giolitti, its intellectual spokesman, and Eugenio Reale, diplomat and former party treasurer. At the same time Pietro Nenni publicly attacked the basic systems of both Soviet and Italian Communism.

The most severe blow to PCI prestige was probably the break with the Italian Socialist party. Since Nenni announced the end of the unity-of-action pact with the Communists in 1956, the two parties have engaged in a continuous controversy, although Communists and Socialists continued closely identified in the CGIL, cooperatives, and over 1,000 local governing bodies. On the vote confirming Fanfani's government in August 1960, the Socialists for the first time in 13 years abstained in preference to joining the Communists in the opposition. In November 1960 the Socialists for the first time presented provincial election slates in competition with Communist lists.

The prospect of PCI political isolation sharpened in early 1961 when the Christian Democrats

accepted Socialist collaboration in forming municipal governments in the key cities of Milan and Genoa.

Sources of Strength

Despite these blows, the Italian Communist party leadership probably views the future with some optimism. Rumors that Togliatti is about to be replaced have died down during the past year, and his position in international Communism is relatively high. After some initial hesitation over Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin he quickly stepped into line, and now is firmly behind Moscow in the Sino-Soviet dispute, although friction on the issue continues within the party.

He may anticipate that Soviet foreign policy will create less difficulty for the Italian party than was usually the case in the 1950s, but even if he is called on to defend a new switch, he probably hopes to rely heavily on the increased prestige the USSR has derived in recent years. The Soviets' success in orbiting the first space satellite in the fall of 1957 and their more recent Venus probe offer dramatic opportunities for Italian Communist exploitation.

The Italian Communist party, besides being accepted as a respectable political group, has heavily penetrated the Italian cultural field. Furthermore, the party retains its wartime prestige as leader of the anti-Fascist resistance, and it was natural for the Socialists and members of the center parties to join the Communists in the anti-Fascist rallies which precipitated the downfall of Premier Tambroni in mid-1960. While politically motivated strikes called by the Communists no longer attract the mass response Communist agitators were able to

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elicit just after the war, the riots this summer showed that issues such as anti-Fascism can still elicit joint action with the Communists. In the spring of 1960 the Communists were able to exploit disorders between civilians and government paratroops in Pisa and Leghorn.

A rash of short strikes later in 1960 indicates a new urgency in labor's demands. Management no longer discriminates against the Communists in order to secure US-backed contracts for manufacture of military materials, and recent shop steward elections have again given the CGIL strong support. On genuine economic issues the Christian Democratic and Social Democratic labor unions participate in strike activity with the CGIL, as in the December walkout of metalworkers.

Moreover, Italy's basic socio-economic ills, which the Communists have long decried, are still to be cured. The disparity in wealth between north and south has not been overcome and maldistribution of wealth between social classes is still great. While the industrial north has a per capita income comparable to that of France, the national average is pulled down drastically by large

ITALY
DISTRIBUTION OF SEATS ON KEY CITY COUNCILS
FOLLOWING LOCAL ELECTIONS OF 4 NOVEMBER 1960

	CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS	DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISTS	LIBERALS	REPUBLICANS	COMMUNISTS	SOCIALISTS	NEO-FASCISTS	MONARCHISTS	OTHERS
Rome (80 seats)	28	3	3	1	19	11	12	3	--
Milan (80 seats)	25	8	6	--	17	17	5	2	--
Turin (80 seats)	27	8	5	1	20	12	2	2	2***
Genoa (80 seats)	27	6	3	1	22	17	4	--	1*
Venice (80 seats)	23	4	2	--	14	13	3	--	--
Florence (80 seats)	22	4	3	--	20	9	3	--	1*
Naples (80 seats)	21	1	1	--	19	5	3	30	--
Palermo (80 seats)	24	2	2	--	9	4	5	5	9**

* Independent ** Dissident Christian Democrats *** Local Autonomy party

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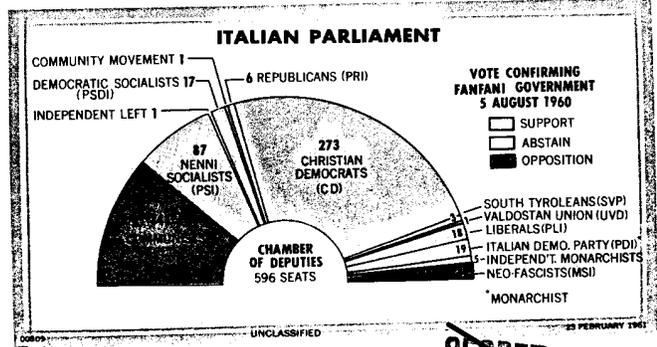
poverty-stricken areas in the south, where, in contrast with the national trend, the latest figures show income down and unemployment up; economic conditions in the south closely resemble those of Greece and Portugal. Even allowing for the reported one-third reduction of unemployment in the past two years, some 5 percent of the labor force of 20,000,000 is still jobless, and many others are underemployed.

Then, too, improvement of the economy has created a "revolution of expectations" which helps the Communists. In the November local elections, although they lost in the depressed south where they had earlier shown brief gains, the Communists recouped in the prosperous area--central and northern Italy--where they had earlier been losing ground. Despite the impact of the Hungarian revolt on Italian opinion, large numbers of voters in Italy are willing to express their dissatisfaction with their own government in a protest vote for the extreme left.

Government Policy

The domination of the national government by one party during virtually all of the postwar period gives the Communists an increasingly effective issue. In addition to charges of legislative inaction, they have been able to cite such specific cases of official

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corruption as the Montesi scandal of 1953 and the Giuffre financial swindle in 1959-- both of which allegedly involved Christian Democratic cabinet members--as well as the current uproar over contracts for the new Rome airport at Fiumicino. The Communists have astutely soft-pedaled the issue of clericalism, stressing rather the cynicism and general malaise which has developed in Italy during the Christian Democrats' monopoly of power.

The Christian Democrats probably realize that as a matter of practical politics, their ability to keep their own party together derives in some degree from their posture as defenders of Italy from the largest Communist group outside the Sino-Soviet bloc. Possibly for this reason, they have failed to take effective action against the Communists in some areas--where it would seem to have been possible--such as curtailment of East-West trade, on which the party is frequently given a secret commission. In addition the minor parties supporting the government are reluctant to urge legal measures which, although designed to curb the Communist party, might nevertheless threaten their own civil liberties.

More important, the inability of a government supported by groups of diverse economic ideology to agree on needed socio-economic reforms has resulted in a series of short-lived cabinets and the narrowing of the center parties' parliamentary majority to less than 2 percent. The Christian Democrats' powerful right-wing minority last year prevented the party from forming a viable reformist government with a broadened majority based on Socialist parliamentary support. Such tactics threaten to drive the Socialists back into the opposition with the Communists.

The failure of Italian governments to reflect the national voting trend to the left also swells Communist support. Last summer the Christian Democratic Tambroni government's reliance--despite the disapproval of all other parties--on neo-Fascist parliamentary support permitted the Communists to achieve solidarity with the democratic parties in anti-Fascist demonstrations, which in some cases the Communists turned into bloody riots. The situation gave them an opportunity to attempt a renewal of Communist-Socialist cooperation which would put a roadblock in the way of a rapprochement between the Socialists and the Christian Democrats.

The Socialist - Christian Democratic coalition in the Milan and Genoa city governments has reportedly led PCI leaders to disagree over whether a more flexible attitude should be adopted toward the Socialists in order to avoid eventual isolation on the national level. The immediate Communist objective is to stymie Nenni's attempt to win broad Socialist backing for a move toward rapprochement with the Christian Democrats following the Socialists' March congress.

Outlook

Communist mass appeal and voting strength depend principally on factors outside the party: the state of the world's prosperity, the cold war, Communist ideological turns, and the domestic political and particularly the economic policies of the Italian Government. In the short run, formation of a rightist government would push the moderate left--even including left-wing Christian Democrats--toward joining ranks with the Communists in a kind of popular front. In the long run, an authoritarian government which deferred elections indefinitely would face

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the threat of disturbances possibly leading to civil war. Some political leaders apparently continue to fear that former premiers Tambroni or Scelba or some other rightist leader will return to power and espouse such methods.

Formation of a Socialist-supported government which would undertake basic socio-economic reforms is obviously feared by Communist strategists. Even under such a government, however, the damage to party fortunes would probably be gradual. The poverty in some areas is still sufficiently intense and the appetite for consumer amenities has been sufficiently whetted elsewhere to keep the Italian populace vulnerable to class-war propaganda.

The party's propaganda machine has shown itself adept at magnifying the effect of even a mild recession like that of 1958, and at the same time attributing all economic gains to Communist pressure on the

business and political communities. The habit of protest-voting is deeply ingrained in Italy, and if the PCI becomes the only opposition party on the left it will probably be able to draw the protest vote until the Socialist--or some other--party emerges as a democratic alternative to Christian Democratic government.

If, on the other hand, an Italian government with a parliamentary majority enlarged by Socialist support should fail to act on socio-economic reforms, Nenni's party could be expected to suffer a fate similar to that of Democratic Socialist Saragat. When Saragat split away from Nenni in 1947, he took more than half the Socialist deputies with him but--as a result of his inability to influence the government's social policies--he now controls less than one fifth as many as Nenni. This time, the lost deputies would go to the Communists. (SECRET)

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