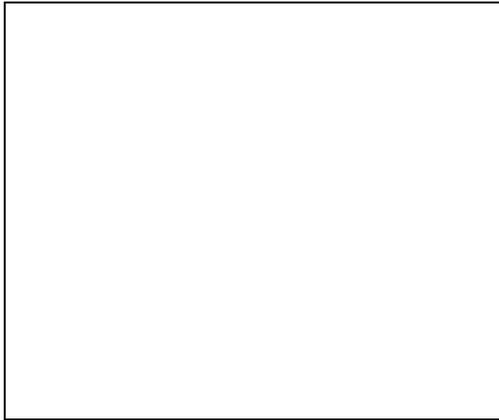
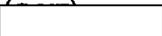




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Articles

Italy: Bossi and Orlando—  
Battling for Institutional  
Reform



Amid the clamor for political and electoral reform in Italy, two distinct voices have emerged: the north's Umberto Bossi and the south's Leoluca Orlando. Longtime outsiders, the two leaders have prospered by putting the traditional parties on the defensive. But, because their respective organizations garnered enough votes in April's parliamentary election to gain a presence in the legislature, they must either show they can operate within the system or risk losing support.

**Cultivating an Outsider Image**

As public sentiment has turned against the mainstream parties—the Christian Democratic Party (DC), the Socialist Party (PSI), and the Democratic Party of the Left—Bossi and Orlando have carefully cultivated their images as political outsiders. Although Orlando was a longtime member of the DC, he relinquished his party membership in 1991 and formed La Rete (The Net) to further his political goals. Bossi has maintained his opposition from the outset by working for over a decade to establish the Lega Lombarda (the Lombard League) as a force for reform.

Bossi and Orlando rely heavily on personal popularity to project their messages. Charismatic speakers, they actively seek the spotlight and easily draw crowds. Both have a penchant for picking public fights with prominent politicians, gaining publicity and furthering their images as men who will buck the system. Orlando, however, is usually seen as more moderate and well spoken than Bossi. Moreover, US Embassy officials note that Orlando is less caustic than Bossi and, as a practiced politician, has been careful not to sever all ties to the DC.

Although Bossi and Orlando strongly believe that institutional changes are necessary, they have traveled markedly different paths to political prominence:

- Bossi's humble beginnings have played directly into his image as a "man of the people." The son of a poor northern farmer, he never completed school,

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**Current Government Crisis**

*Following a legislative election in early April 1992, the government of Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti resigned. The intricate process of forming a new cabinet has been made even more difficult since each party in the governing coalition had lost votes, although the coalition as a whole retained a slim majority. Moreover, President Francesco Cossiga added to the confusion when he resigned immediately after Andreotti. Christian Democrat Oscar Luigi Scalfaro was elected President on 25 May after 16 rounds of balloting. He now has the task of nominating a prime minister.* [redacted]

although he briefly studied medicine. He held a series of low-paying jobs before jumping into politics.

- Orlando comes from a privileged background, making him an unlikely figure to seek sweeping changes in the status quo. Born into a well-to-do family in Palermo, he attended a private Jesuit high school and later earned a law degree from the University of Palermo. He also did graduate work in Germany and England. For over a decade he worked for the DC, advising prominent southern politicians and serving on the Palermo City Council. In 1985 he was elected mayor of Palermo on the DC ticket.

**Creating a Formidable Opposition**

Although both Bossi and Orlando have attacked the present political system and called for a complete overhaul of the government, neither has articulated a

full-scale plan to reorganize political and economic institutions. They have adopted different, broad approaches to reform because of their contrasting geographic perspectives:

- Coming from the highly industrialized and wealthy north, Bossi has effectively portrayed Rome as an overly centralized bureaucracy that sends northern money to the underdeveloped and undeserving south. He also recognizes that voters are disenchanted with the current *partitocrazia* (rule by the party) and has successfully pushed for greater regional autonomy while simultaneously blaming the major parties for fostering inept government.
- Because the mainstream parties are more entrenched in the south than in the north, Orlando has taken a different approach to institutional reform. Rather than directly attack the vast and lucrative patronage practices that Bossi abhors, Orlando has focused instead on government corruption and inefficiency. He also has blasted the Mafia, claiming that it has infiltrated all levels of government, and blames the DC and the PSI for the current state of affairs. [redacted] he believes that the Mafia cannot be beaten until the political process is reformed and honesty restored in the government. In our view, Orlando successfully plays upon fears of the Mafia in the south and has effectively designed his campaign as a "moral revolt" of the people. [redacted]

**Achievements to Date**

Failure of the two leaders to detail far-reaching programs has not stopped voters from supporting them. In the legislative elections on 5-6 April, the Lombard League garnered 8.8 percent of the vote, and its legislative presence mushroomed from two to 82 representatives, becoming the fourth-largest party in Parliament. Bossi himself polled over 250,000 personal preference votes, surpassing PSI Secretary Bettino Craxi as the most popular politician in the north. Orlando's Net managed to come from nowhere to gain 2 percent of the national vote, emerging as the 10th-largest party. Its share of the vote was just

slightly lower than two of the governing coalition partners. In attracting voters from across the political and economic spectrum, the two men have been able to steal the mainstream parties' voters, especially small to medium-size entrepreneurs, blue-collar workers, the intelligentsia, and the middle class. Orlando proudly claims his movement is not beholden to any group or faction but is made up of citizens with high ethics who want to reform the system. [redacted]

The electoral successes of The Net and the Lombard League have forced the established parties to reevaluate the political status quo and have created enough public outcry to force party bosses to grudgingly admit the need for change. But we believe the public still does not view Bossi and Orlando as serious politicians with long-term agendas. Moreover, their organizations lack parliamentary experience and, as a result, have had virtually no say in the formation of a government. [redacted]

**Benefits of Opposition Status**

Bossi and Orlando are likely to remain in opposition for the next few years and let the mainstream parties continue declining. As one politician has noted, it is easier for them to criticize from without rather than govern from within:

- Bossi firmly believes his party will completely dominate the administrative elections in 1995 if it continues in the opposition. [redacted] the League has made a less-than-stellar showing in local governments. League delegates perform very well during free-for-all debates and general discussion, but they lose their voices when concrete proposals are needed. [redacted] Moreover, Bossi refused to allow League members to govern in Brescia after the movement polled the most votes in 1991 regional elections.
- In our view, Orlando believes he gains greater attention in opposition and fears his movement would be relegated to the margins if it joined the government. In a recent interview he declared that a force seeking reform should not want to enter the government. He believes his movement should retain its ability to "challenge, stimulate, and advance proposals." Orlando has also claimed that The Net

is not seeking any ministries in the next government; rather, he wants to stay out of the government until it is reformed. [redacted]

**Outlook**

We expect Bossi and the Lombard League to remain on the scene for the foreseeable future, and we anticipate that Bossi's maverick image will continue to work both for and against him. By continuing his negative campaign, Bossi will probably gather further public support for his cause. Nevertheless, his fervent antiestablishment attitude will make it difficult for him to garner the necessary backing in Parliament from the mainstream parties to effect the dramatic changes he wants. To maintain momentum he must develop a viable program and redirect his organization to get his new, inexperienced legislators up to speed quickly. [redacted]

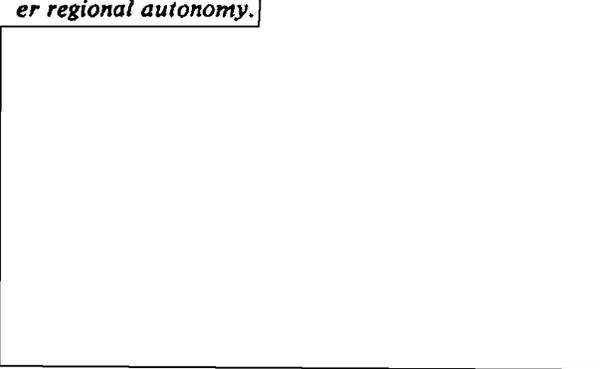
In our view, Orlando's moderation and connections to the DC will allow him to deal with the major parties in Parliament. At the same time, his opposition status will continue to win support from his constituents. His solid grounding in local politics will help in his debut on the national scene. Nevertheless, with its weak party structure and reliance on Orlando's personality, The Net will be hard pressed to survive in the south once Orlando leaves for Rome. Moreover, Orlando still faces an uphill battle in his own backyard as the mainstream parties build their strength in the south. We believe there is only a slight chance he could return to the DC fold. [redacted]

We believe Bossi's and Orlando's presence will enliven parliamentary proceedings because the two men will refuse to allow business to go on as usual. Bossi claims his movement, by virtue of its reformist nature and sizable public support, will decide the balance of power in Parliament. Although Bossi and Orlando will both be working against the status quo, their perspectives on reform remain so divergent that they will probably work against each other once specific reform legislation is proposed. (Even if they were to work together, the size of their combined groups would not be enough to form an alternative to a

**The Men Behind the Scenes**

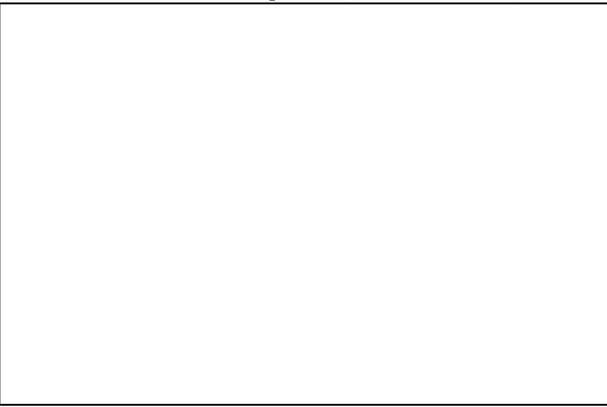
**Gianfranco Miglio—Bossi's Brain**

*A retired political science professor at Milan's Catholic University and a recently elected senator, Gianfranco Miglio is the chief strategist for the Lombard League. He advocates nothing less than a complete rewriting of the Constitution, with emphasis on greater regional autonomy.*



**Father Ennio Pintacuda—Orlando's Mentor-Confessor**

*A political scientist and sociologist, Father Ennio Pintacuda serves Leoluca Orlando as both confessor and adviser and exerts great influence in his life.*



mainstream-party coalition.) While we do not expect the mainstream parties to invite either movement to join the government, we believe Bossi and Orlando would be willing to have a representative in the cabinet should a serious reformer be named prime minister. 

**Implications for the United States**

Bossi and Orlando have little experience in foreign affairs: both tend to focus primarily on domestic issues and shy away from discussing foreign policy. Nevertheless, both voted against Italian participation in the Persian Gulf war. Bossi told US officials he was pandering to leftists and pacifists and felt his negative vote would bolster his standing. His advisers told  that Bossi's vote was a mistake and that they chalked it up to inexperience. Orlando was also courting leftwing support but stressed that his vote was based on his deeply held religious beliefs. We believe Orlando was strongly influenced by his closest adviser, Father Ennio Pintacuda, a Jesuit priest. 