

Very interesting  
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Dr. Giancarlo Bosetti

The news editor of the Milan edition of L'Unita', with whom I had lunch, forecast a decline in the Communist vote in the 1980 administrative elections, compared to those of 1975. A decline sufficient to lose it some of the big city governments it gained then for the first time. An increase in the Socialist vote might save for the Left the less vulnerable of these administrations. Craxi and Berlinguer had reached an understanding at their Milan meeting on the occasion of the Milan - Inter football match on 28 October. The two-hour meeting had among other subjects concerned elections and post-election tactics. But it was unlikely that the Socialist gains, if any, would be enough to compensate for the Communist losses.

The Christian Democrats were also set to lose ground at the next elections. The gainers from Communist defections would be not the Christian Democrats, nor, except to a very small degree the Socialists, but the Radicals. In Milan the Radical Party was dominated by its anti-Pannella faction and had intimated willingness to consider cooperation with the PCI after the election. But elsewhere Pannella was for the most part in command and he would see to it that the Radical Party would continue its strategy of seizing on every controversial issue as a means of self-advertisement and of destabilizing the two main parties.

Bosetti mentioned a public meeting held in Milan on 10 November on the question of missile bases. The discussion had been called by the PCI, but two prominent Left-wing non-Communists ~~seminars~~, the former theological assistant of Cardinal Siri of Genoa, Padre Gianni Baget-Bozzo, and Mario Capanna (PDuP) were among the platform speakers. Well advertised though it was, the meeting attracted only seventy people. Bosetti took this to be an indication of the PCI's loss of impetus and an illustration of public unawareness - or refusal to be aware - of serious issues.

The world had entered a critical period politically and economically and Italy was one of the countries most vulnerable to its repercussions. But there was no evidence in public opinion and very little in the media of awareness of this.

Bosetti expressed alarm at the deterioration of relations between the USSR and the West. There was every sign, he thought, that the world would soon be right back in the state of cold war of Stalin's time and it would be difficult to get back to a less tense situation because, since the emergence of China in its new role, a lasting great power agreement on peaceful co-existence had to be three sided instead of only two.

About Amendola's article in Rinascita criticising PCI policy in the trade union movement Bosetti's reaction was, predictably perhaps, much the same as that of Berlinguer reported in this morning's Corriere: namely that though there was some justification for the criticism, it presupposed a complete change in economic direction which the unions themselves alone could not be expected to achieve.

Bosetti said that the radical economic changes Italy needed inevitably involved sacrifices in the standard of living. The working class would never accept these sacrifices unless there was evidence that they were being imposed fairly and throughout the community; that, for instance, tax evasion by the rich and the self-employed was being seriously combatted. To carry through the reforms essential for Italy's economic survival needed a strong government; a strong government meant a government in which the Communists participated. Whether such a government was still a practical proposition depended on the outcome of the Christian Democrat national convention next January. Bosetti himself thought the prospects of Communist participation in government had diminished since the killing of Moro and were likely to diminish further.

There was, however, he said, an influential cross-section of the DC which did accept that the Italian situation called for a return to a government of national emergency, this time with PCI support at government level and with a Socialist President of the Council. The chief agent in spreading this thinking within the DC was the Lega Democratica. This was not a "corrente", but an ideas group, of which several ministers of the present government - including Andreatta - and the Prodi brothers - Romano, Minister of Industry in the penultimate Andreotti government, and Paolo (like Romano a professor at Bologna University), two other Bolognese, Achille Ardigo', a long time influence on DC policy and, Luigi Pedrazzi, of Il Mulino, were among the members. On the whole the Base element in the DC listened willingly to the Lega Democratica proposals, so, more circumspectly, did Andreotti and his followers. Zaccagnini kept aloof but was not unsympathetic. I asked who the Socialist President of the Council would be. "Craxi, of course". "And the PCI would accept him?" "They certainly would not oppose him". It was clear though that acceptance of a Craxi government depended on that government being a national emergency one - and not the resuscitation of the Centre Left.

The DC in Lombardy was for the most part Base dominated outside Milan; but in Milan the Centre factions and Forze Nuove (Donat Cattin) were in control. Vittorino Colombo,

a Forze Nuove notable ("and one of the worst ministers we have ever had") was trying to extend the rather tenuous alliance between the anti-Base factions to the whole of the region in order that the Lombardy delegation to the DC national congress would be of a strongly anti-PCI stamp.

*Peter Thompson*  
P H P Thompson  
12.11.1979

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