

Very interesting
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Dr Giancarlo Bosetti

ph. WJ.

Dr Bosetti, until now the editor of the local news pages of the Milan edition of L'Unità, is shortly to become its chief assistant editor: capo redattore - a job, he said, notorious for the high incidence of heart failure of those engaged in it. The hazard was greater in a party paper because of the continual struggle to reconcile the claims on space of news and party speeches.

Among other subjects in a lunch-time conversation were Fiat, the Forlani government, and cost-of-living wage increases. Dr Bosetti made the following points.

Fiat.

The PCI did not regard the Fiat settlement as a defeat. It would have been a defeat, and a very serious one, if the Fiat proposal to sack a large number of its employees had been carried out. It would have served as a precedent for the restoration of the practice of sacking generally. The abolition of this practice had been the key advantage won by the workers as a result of the hot autumn of 1969. The loss of it would gradually be followed by the loss of all the other advantages. The PCI looked upon itself, and was regarded by its supporters, as the guardian of these advantages, and of the principle of job security. In other countries when a business was doing badly it might attempt to improve its position by dismissing employees. Not in Italy. In Italy other solutions had to be found. Reduction of the cost of labour, by such measures as the fiscalisation of social insurance contributions and the phasing out of the practice of making severance payments, was favoured by the PCI; so was a greater mobility of labour provided it was achieved through management/union agreement.

Though the PCI did not see the outcome of the Fiat dispute as a defeat it did agree with that part of union opinion which looked upon the decision to strike for an indefinite period as having been a mistake. The unions in Italy had neither the financial resources nor the mental aptitude to engage in a major strike of unlimited duration.

Berlinguer's intervention, pledging support if the strikers should decide on an eventual occupation of Fiat, was a gesture expected of him by the many PCI local officials among the strikers, the PCI representatives in Turin comune and province, and the mass of PCI supporters.

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The Forlani Government.

The participation of Zaccagnini supporters in the new government and the probable choice of Andreotti to succeed Forlani as the President of the DC, opened up prospects of PCI collaboration with the Government on specific issues, and even a return to the wide consensus on policy which backed the single-party DC governments from August 1976 to the end of 1978. An obstacle to this development, perhaps the chief obstacle at the moment, was Craxi.

Craxi had resented the fall of the Cossiga government, regarding it as a challenge to his authority within the PSI. A challenge engineered by the PCI with the connivance of some of the Left of the DC and the PSI. The press had estimated the number of the franchi tiratori whose vote against their party had put Cossiga in a minority to have been 31. There were in fact more because some of the PSDI and MSI had abandoned their party lines by voting for Cossiga. The anti-Cossiga sharp shooters had been about equally divided between the DC and the PSI. Craxi had, however, repaired the breach within his party - at least for the time being - and was stronger than ever. His ambitions were helped along by friendship with Rizzoli and the backing of his press, including Corriere della Sera, but most evidently by L'Europeo, and they did not include an improvement in the relations between the DC and the PCI.

Twenty-one Referendums.

The proliferation of referendums seemed to occasion Dr. Bossetti amusement. Twenty-one are due to be held next year: 10 initiated by the Radical party, two by the Catholic organization "Movement for Life", and 8 by a Right-wing DC splinter group called Partito Cristiano di Azione Sociale which polled 3000 votes in the Administrative elections last June. The eight PCAS referendums concern only Lombardy and aspects of regional administration, in particular the health service, public transport and town and country planning.

Dr Bossetti had news of a twenty-first referendum. The PDUP is to begin collecting signatures next February for a referendum to abrogate the law by which cost-of-living addition to wages (contingenze) are not to be counted in calculating severance pay (liquidazione). There is no doubt that the necessary 500,000 signatures will be forthcoming. The law is highly unpopular and that the PCI voted for it was, Dr Bossetti said, a big factor in the PCI's loss of votes in the 1979 elections.



The government may however thwart the holding of this 21st referendum by itself rescinding the law as part of a package deal with the unions to phase out severance payments. This would involve compensatory increases in weekly and monthly salaries. Severance payments are in fact, Dr Bosetti pointed out, merely deferred payments of salary.

P H P Thompson

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