

## IN THE WORLD

## ITALY



Italian Communist leader Enrico Berlinguer (right) and Premier Giulio Andreotti (left) cast their ballots in the national election last week.

# In its confusion, Italian left stumbles

By Diane Johnstone

R O M E

**I**T COULD HAVE BEEN WORSE. THAT was the widespread reaction in the Italian left to the June 3 parliamentary elections. Everyone knew that voters were going to punish the Italian Communist Party (PCI) for three years of compromises with the ever-ruling Christian Democrats (DC) that let down hopes for change aroused by the PCI's big gains in 1976. The PCI slumped to 30.4 percent of the vote for the Chamber of Deputies (slightly to the left of the less important Senate, kept conservative by a voting age set at 25 instead of 18), compared to its June 1976 peak score of 34.4 percent, losing 26 of its 227 seats in the 630-seat body.

In the poor, underdeveloped south, the PCI lost much of the new "hope vote" it had picked up in recent years, dropping over seven percentage points in Naples and some Sicilian cities. It fell five points in Turin (picked up by the Radicals and the far left) and over three points in Genoa and Milan, but otherwise its losses were relatively slight in the traditional communist strongholds of the prosperous north. Workers tended to put aside their virtually unanimous disgust with the mistakes of Enrico Berlinguer's "Historic Compromise" to come to the aid of their party as it headed for sure defeat.

But there was no general shift to the right. Much of the lost PCI vote obviously went to Marco Pannella's eccentric Radical Party, which tripled its 1976 showing to score 3.6 percent nationwide, making it the only clear winner. Otherwise, party strength remained remarkably stable.

The Christian Democrats failed to make the gains forecast by pollsters and barely held their own with 38.3 percent, down from 38.7, losing one seat. Thus they apparently did not pick up any "sympathy vote" from the fact that the Red Brigades have been "campaigning" against them by shooting up their headquarters and party officials from time to time.

Indeed, Italian voters seemed completely unimpressed by terrorism. Fears that terrorist attacks might strengthen the right proved unfounded, as the neo-fascists fell back from slightly above to slightly below 6 percent, losing five seats. Lost DC and neo-fascist votes apparently went to the smaller center and center-right "lay" parties—Liberals, Social Democrats and Republicans—whose modest

gains reflected calm in the middle classes.

The Socialist Party (PSI) picked up five seats, but its share of the vote crept up only slightly, from 9.6 to 9.8 percent. Disgruntled Communist voters obviously did not heed PSI leader Bettino Craxi's argument that the Italian left must be "rebalanced" in favor of the Socialists. Craxi is now approaching the small "lay" parties, preparing to try to drive a hard bargain with the DC for a share of power.

His position is fairly weak, but he did the Christian Democrats a big favor with his long campaign against the PCI's "Leninism," making it easier for DC leaders to go back to their old "ideological veto" of Communist participation in government without seeming to be taking orders from Washington. The trick now is to find some sort of center-left coalition that won't look just like past, discredited center-left coalitions. Craxi is justifying his desertion of left unity (which won't sit well with all PSI voters) in the name of "governability."

Polls had forecast that the far left, wracked by splits and regroupings since it barely made it into parliament in 1976, and too poor to campaign visibly, would be wiped out this time. It was thus a happy surprise for the PDUP (Democratic Party of Proletarian Unity) of Lucio Magri and Luciana Castellina to find themselves with 1.4 percent of the vote and six deputies, thanks mainly to Milan workers hostile to the "Historic Compromise." PDUP is the most fervent advocate of union of the left, and its spokeswoman Lidia Menapace said the group's first task would be to "prevent the PSI from going into a centrist government."

A second far left group, the United New-Left (NSU), a remnant of the old Proletarian Democracy (DP) group farther than the PDUP from the PCI and closer to the newspaper *Lotta Continua*, got 0.8 percent of the vote and no seats. Altogether, the left—defined as the PCI, the PSI, the far left and the Radicals—got 45.8 percent, compared to 46.6 percent three years ago.

This is not too bad a showing at a time when the whole European left is in the doldrums. It is reasonable to conclude that the Communists lost votes to their left rather than to their right—and to abstention, which rose to 9.6 percent from only 6.6 percent in 1976.

## Left weary of "strategies."

The Italian left is still there, but increasingly weary of talk of "strategies"—its

own or its enemies'—that never seem to lead anywhere. Exasperation with "strategy" and the concessions it entails helps account for the appeal of the Radicals.

Pannella's party is a multi-issue collection of single-issue activists held together to some extent by their charismatic leader, but more significantly by a contemporary sensibility common to sophisticated minorities in all advanced western nations. Radicals are for free abortion, homosexual rights, legalized marijuana, the abolition of national boundaries and all other obstacles to individual freedom. They are against violence, the draft, military courts, nuclear power and political repression, which they are quick to spot most everywhere. Radicals "do their own thing" with no ideology or program. "We don't have a program and we don't want one," abortion activist and Deputy Emma Bonino said during the campaign. "Election platforms are bullshit."

Italians find Pannella's approach exotic, a hybrid of Abbie Hoffman and Doctor Spock, perhaps, imported from California. In any country, such activists could expect to outrage conservatives by their "permissiveness" and publicity-seeking "antics" such as sitting gagged through 20 minutes of TV time to illustrate their contention that the media muzzles free speech. In Italy, they arouse even greater aversion on the left, especially in the PCI. After all, if the causes defended by the radicals have so far been liberal ones approved by the left, disruptive tactics by a small group could be used just as effectively to less appealing ends. Mass action by the working class is the only assurance against eventual right-wing manipulation. So the argument runs. Communists call the Radicals "narcissistic," "self-indulgent," "exhibitionist," "clowns" and even "fascists."

A lot of Italian Communists see their primary mission as bringing orderly democratic institutional life to a country they consider to be in a frightful mess. Pannella adds to an already rich confusion, and offers no solutions to major social and economic problems.

In the last parliament, while the PCI was soberly trying to play by the rules, a mere four Radical deputies managed to disrupt normal business on behalf of their crusades with 648 speeches, 19 motions and 471 challenging interrogations, not to mention hunger strikes and other less parliamentary procedures. Communists note gloomily that the fresh contingent of 18 Radical deputies will have enough

people to sit on all the committees and create constant turmoil, paralyzing and discrediting democratic institutions. They are already paralyzed and discredited, Radicals retort.

## Pannella no fascist.

Communists express concern that a movement with a charismatic (and demagogic) leader without coherent ideology or class position could veer towards some new form of fascism. But a "fascism" based on anti-militaristic libertarian non-violence is a monster that even the fertile Italian political womb might have trouble bringing into the world.

Pannella's individualistic clan are light years away from Mussolini's uniformed thugs. The real problem for the PCI is not so much what Pannella and the Radicals might turn into but what they already are—a new pole of attraction drawing young people and intellectuals away from the PCI with a new type of intransigent activism diametrically opposed to PCI methods and which delights in putting the PCI on the spot.

The most telling example was last year's referendum on the Reale law, a piece of repressive legislation strengthening police powers that had been opposed by the PCI when it was passed in 1975. The Radicals collected enough signatures to call a nationwide referendum to repeal it.

The referendum came up shortly after DC chairman Aldo Moro was murdered by the Red Brigades. The PCI was trapped into a situation of "damned if you do, damned if you don't." If the Communists voted to repeal the Reale law, they would be accused by Christian Democrats of favoring Red Brigade terrorism by depriving the police of means to fight back. If they voted to keep it, they would be accused from the left (and from parts of the right) of seeking to turn Italy into a "Gulag."

PCI leaders chose the second course, and instructed their members to vote to keep the Reale law in order to save the "Historic Compromise" with the Christian Democrats. They acknowledged that the thing to do was keep it and then improve it by amendments later on.

Many Communists could not bring themselves to vote for the Reale law, while others did so with a heavy heart. The law was kept, the promised amendments never saw the light of day—and the "Historic Compromise" was not saved. Such are the demoralizing incidents that led to the PCI's defeat at the polls.



## EUROUNIONISM



President Wim Kok of the European Trade Union Federation.

# Hungry for jobs, European unions push 35-hour week

By Diana Johnstone

PARIS

**T**HE 35-HOUR WORK WEEK IS emerging as the main battle-cry of the European labor movement. Meeting in Munich in mid-May, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) set full employment and 10 percent reduction of work time without salary loss as top priorities for the next three years. Besides the 35-hour week, the ETUC decided to back demands for a sixth week of annual leave, full retirement benefits at age 60, lengthening of obligatory schooling through age 16 and any other measures which, it is hoped, may ease pressure on the labor market.

The ETUC's new president, Dutch union leader Wim Kok, told the Munich Congress' closing session on May 18 that job redistribution through reduction of work time was an "absolute necessity." He called mass unemployment a deadly threat to democracy. Those hardest hit are women, young people, the handicapped and immigrant workers, he noted.

Kok asked whether societies were really democratic when citizens who have constitutional rights to express their political views nevertheless see their very existence threatened by economic pres-

**Cold-war politics linger in the major Confederation, but there are signs of a thaw and openings to French Communists as unionists face trauma of industrial slump.**

sures outside their control.

The six-year-old ETUC has attracted more attention than usual this year because its policies generally coincide with those of the socialist and social democratic parties of the nine European Economic Community countries in their campaign for the June 10 European parliamentary elections. But the organization does not, in fact, correspond to the EEC. It groups 31 confederations, with a total of 40 million members, from 18 west European countries. Missing are three major communist-led confederations: the French CGT, the Spanish Workers Commissions and the unified Portuguese confederation—all three the largest in their countries.

(The Italian communist-led CGIL, however, is an active member in good standing.) Up to now, the CGT has been blackballed by its small French rival, Force Ouvrière (a CIA-backed cold war creation) and by the powerful West German Trade Union Confederation (DGB).

On the other hand, French Democratic Labor Confederation (CFDT) secretary general Edmond Maire spoke in favor of letting the CGT in. The Congress set up a committee to define membership criteria and report back in a year. The outgoing ETUC president, DGB leader Heinz Oskar Vetter, was fiercely opposed to admitting the CGT. His Dutch successor is calmer about the communist threat and said that membership applications would be considered in the light of the willingness shown by the applicants to go along with ETUC programs already adopted.

Kok said pointedly that any enlarging of the ETUC should strengthen its cohesion, activeness and harmony, an apparent hint to the CGT to be on its good behavior to overcome German objections that the communists only want to join the ETUC to wreck it.

The CGT was slow to take the hint. The French Communists, more immediately interested in being elected to the Euro-parliament as foremost defenders of French national sovereignty, raised a hue and cry when Vetter, opening the ETUC Congress, called for transferring some powers to the ETUC and gradually limiting national sovereignty in union action. (Vetter also denied that the Germans were trying to force other Europeans into their mold. "One of the most unfortunate slogans has no doubt been 'the German model' which has flourished in my country in recent years," he said.)

Harmony and cohesion in the ETUC are fragile at best. Simultaneous translations blur the debate between unionists who not only don't speak the same language but have quite different problems and outlooks. For example, the Scandinavians, who have so far been spared serious unemployment, are unenthusiastic about shortening the work week. In time of recession, they would rather concentrate on protecting their considerable social benefits than risk imperiling them by reducing the productive base carrying welfare costs.

Eagerness to cooperate varies. The Italians (notably Communist union leader Luciano Lama) are the most enthusiastic internationalists, in the ETUC as in the EEC, along with the Germans and the Benelux representatives. At the other end of the spectrum are the British, who, according to continental Europeans, "lack international consciousness."

"They're here because they have to be, but they don't feel it," Edmond Maire said. Maire said that labor leaders from Latin countries, used to speaking in terms of the working class, find it odd to hear the Anglo-Saxons insist they speak only for their members. This outlook leads them to press vigorously the demands of their constituency while showing little interest in exploring general policy questions in search of compromise.

The ETUC expressed solidarity with Third World demands for a new economic order, but Kok acknowledged that the means of putting this solidarity into practice were distinctly limited. He also recalled that Europeans "partly owe our own well-being to the injustices of this worldwide system." But in the current economic phase, as old industries such as textiles and steel are moving to the Third World to profit from cheaper labor, the injustices and inequalities of the worldwide system are being turned against the living standards of workers in developed countries. The labor movement in advanced countries is caught between the prospect of real long-range solutions that it lacks the means to bring about, and the temptation of short-term defensive measures.

"Unemployment in our countries is not caused by the developing countries since worldwide employment is not a limited pie to be sliced up," Maire said in his speech to the Congress. "On the contrary, the unsatisfied basic needs throughout the world everywhere call for a job-creat-

ing dynamic—a new type of development opposed to waste of human and material resources."

But what is to spur such a new type of development? Shortly before the ETUC Congress, West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt reportedly quarreled sharply with members of his cabinet over whether development aid creates jobs in Germany. Stressing that Germans must look out for themselves, Schmidt flatly turned down pleas from Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher and Development Aid Minister Rainer Offergeld to increase German aid ahead of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Manila. Presented with figures indicating that increased development aid could safeguard some 60,000 German jobs, Schmidt snapped that thanks to exporting technology, steel is now being refined everywhere, throwing German steel workers out of work and ruining the industry.

German unionists contradict Schmidt. "We think on this question he is absolutely wrong," the DGB spokesman for North Rhine Westphalia, Andreas Schlieper, said in an interview. "First of all, aid is a matter of international solidarity. Second, the wealth of the West comes from exploiting the Third World. Third, we don't believe that aid creates unemployment."

Schlieper belongs to a younger generation of German trade unionists influenced by the spirit of the '60s. In contrast to the older, cold warrior generation, ever on the outlook for Communist plots, he is anti-authoritarian in his attitudes, sensitive to feminism, alarmed over the dangers of nuclear power.

Unlike the older DGB leaders, Schlieper believes there is such a thing as Eurocommunism. "We must help the Communist parties in Italy and France open up," he says (but he sees no hope for the Communist Party in his own country). Although the DGB is officially against letting the CGT into the ETUC, Schlieper's personal opinion is that "we can't ignore the biggest and strongest union in France." (He and other German unionists have noticed that their favored French ally, the CFDT, tends to be more "radical" and unreliable at the base than the CGT. Informed sources say secret DGB-CGT negotiations are underway.)

Schlieper's region includes the old industrial heartland of Germany, the Ruhr valley, whose coal and steel industry is in drastic recession. There are no growth industries in the Ruhr, hardly any chemical or electronics, he said, and the strict environmental zoning laws that preserve the region's green spaces and breathable air would make it practically impossible to put new industries there even if investors wanted to, which they don't.

A major issue in Germany now, termed the *Zumutbarkeit* problem, is whether or not to force the unemployed, especially highly educated young people, into jobs well below their professional qualification. The DGB says no—which is also an indirect way of protecting the jobs of West Germany's 1.7 million foreign "guest workers" who are doing most of the hard and menial labor Germans no longer want to do.

Schlieper said the current economic crisis was shaking the foundations of the "social market economy" launched in West Germany in 1948, which promised workers both higher wages and more social justice. "Now we are being told that capitalism cannot provide both, that we must choose one or the other. We must either accept this logic or change the system."

Given the industrial slump, a highly qualified work force and unmet social and cultural needs, the obvious sensible solution would be to enforce the social services sector of the economy. This at least, is the way things look to most European labor economists. Compared to the sweeping changes that seem necessary to deal with the economic crisis, the 35-hour week is a very small and inadequate measure. But it has the advantage of being simple and clear enough to unify and mobilize the European labor movement.