

Political and Social Sciences Department

From PDS to *Cosa 2*
The Second Congress of the
Democratic Party of the Left

MARTIN J. BULL

SPS No. 97/3

EUI WORKING PAPERS



EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE

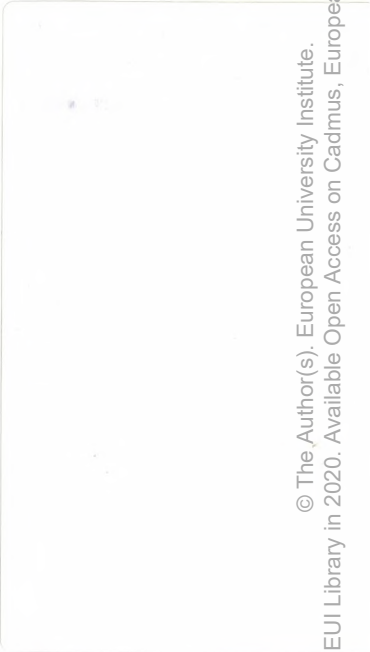
© The Author(s), European University Institute.

Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE



3 0001 0026 2727 3



© The Author(s), European University Institute.

Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, FLORENCE
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES



EUI Working Paper SPS No. 97/3

From PDS to *Cosa 2*
The Second Congress of the Democratic Party of the Left

MARTIN J. BULL

BADIA FIESOLANA, SAN DOMENICO (FI)

**All rights reserved.
No part of this paper may be reproduced in any form
without permission of the author.**

**©Martin J. Bull
Printed in Italy in May 1997
European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I – 50016 San Domenico (FI)
Italy**

1. Introduction: a Decade of Change on the Left

(PSA)

The 2nd. Congress of the Italian Democratic Party of the Left (*Partito democratico della sinistra*, PDS) was held in Rome 20-23 February 1997, and proved to be, if not its last, at least its penultimate, as the congress sanctioned the commencement of a 'constituent phase' and the building of a new party of the left out of *la Cosa 2* ('the second thing'). To the casual observer, this may seem like an extraordinary occurrence and a clear case of *déjà-vu*. After all, had not the *raison d'être* of the PDS been the building of a new party of the left, after the failure of both socialism and communism in Italy? Why, between 1989 and 1991, had the Italian Communist Party (PCI) gone through such a conflictual and heart-rending fifteen month struggle (where it was dubbed *la cosa* - 'the thing') if the result - the PDS - was itself to be superseded by *la cosa 2* and *another* new party after only its second congress? Why, moreover, should this happen after an election *victory* which brought the ex-communists to power for the first time since the founding of the communist party in 1921?

These (entirely legitimate) questions not only demonstrate why it is impossible to explain the PDS's 2nd Congress without reference to its recent past, but also illuminate how much has changed on the Italian left in the last decade, compared with the previous twenty (if not thirty or forty) years of its existence. Indeed, if, ten years ago, one were a young researcher of the Italian left, the scope for interesting contemporary research was rather restricted. The debate was largely predictable, focusing, as it did, on the divisions in the left (between the PCI and the Italian Socialist Party, PSI), the putative 'anti-systemness' and decline of the PCI, and the abandonment of reformism by the PSI. There was much else too, of course, but saying something new, or studying a new contemporary angle, was difficult because there was not a great deal of originality in anything the two main parties of the left were doing.

Then everything changed, and the last decade has witnessed a complete new agenda for research into the left in Italy, which has revitalized the debate and provided an exciting time for specialists and beginners alike. The degree of change on the left was, of course, partly a product of the general changes in

Italian politics which have seen the Christian Democrats (DC) and Socialists (PSI) swept not just out of office but (effectively) out of existence. Yet, both the left's contribution to these general changes and the new agenda for debate and research it has generated have been distinctive, and should not simply be merged into the general analysis of Italian politics in this period (while not, at the same time, remaining totally divorced from it).

The trajectory of the left since 1988, and of the PCI/PDS in particular, has provided an excellent example of party organizational, ideological and strategic change in a highly unstable political environment. Amongst other things, it has provided opportunities to: apply the communist transformation to theories of west European communism and party change (Bull 1991); assess the PCI-PDS comparatively in the context of the west European communist movement (Bell 1993; Bull and Heywood 1994; Wilson 1993), the social democratic movement (Pasquino 1993, Bull 1994), and new party models (Baccetti 1997); document and assess the changing attitudes of militants (Ignazi 1992); apply an anthropological perspective to the struggle to dissolve the PCI (Kertzer 1996); assess the PDS's role in Italy's transition (Abse 1993; Bull 1996a; Salvati 1993); and, more generally, document the reconstruction of the Italian left in terms of new parties and new alliances (Bull 1996b; Rhodes 1994).

The reconstitution of the left, moreover, far from being complete, has been given a further impulse by the PDS's 2nd. Congress, something which should ensure - for PCI/PDS *aficionados* - that the process of dramatic change, which began with Achille Occhetto's original proposal for a 'new course' and 'new party' in the Autumn of 1988 (a year before the collapse of the Berlin Wall), will run for a full ten years. This article, therefore, is part of ongoing research on the left in Italy, and attempts to explain the origins, significance and outcome of the key issue at the PDS's 2nd. Congress: the future of the party itself.

2. The Need to Supersede the PDS

The view that the PDS needed to be superseded derived partly from a view that it had failed in its principal objective, and that, as a result, consolidating the 1996 victory of the left would not be possible while the party remained

formally in existence. The original objectives of Achille Occhetto in transforming the PCI into the PDS had been to end the 'communist question', thus opening up the possibility of alternation in government and a victory of the left. His leadership foundered on the failure to achieve the last objective: in 1994, alternation was achieved, but an unexpected one, which brought the right to power under Berlusconi (Bartolini and D'Alimonte 1996; Bull 1995b; Bull and Newell 1995; Pasquino 1994; Pasquino 1995).

If Occhetto's successor, Massimo D'Alema, was more successful in 1996, it cannot be said that it was due to any radical renovation in the PDS itself; rather, the left and centre were able to learn from their mistakes in 1994, and this time successfully forged an alliance which was able to defeat a disunited and weaker right. Indeed, the victory of the center-left coalition, the *Ulivo* (Olive Tree), was more the product of the changes in the make-up of the principal alliances than of a significant realignment of the electorate (D'Alimonte and Bartolini 1997; Newell and Bull 1996). The *Ulivo* itself is an extraordinarily complex alliance which took months of negotiations to put together, and it contains elements within it (and notably Lamberto Dini's *Rinnovamento italiano*) which are unlikely to stay in an alliance with the left if a more centrist alliance or party can be constructed (Newell and Bull 1997).

The *Ulivo* is only able to govern, moreover, with the support in parliament of *Rifondazione comunista* (Communist Refoundation), a party which was formed out of opposition to the transformation of the PCI in 1991. The *Ulivo*'s success, therefore, can only be seen in the broader context of the reshaping of the Italian party system. Because this process is as yet incomplete, and because most politicians and parties have (competing) strategic objectives which go beyond the current government and party system, the question which arose within the left once the April 1996 celebrations died down was the following: in what way does the *Ulivo* and its victory advance the prospect of a single united party (or at least permanent alliance of parties) which would sit to the left of centre and which - in the event of analogous developments to the right - might be opposed by a single united party, or alliance, to the right of centre in a genuinely bipolarised party system? It was in searching for an answer to this question that the idea of superseding the PDS was, for the first time, seriously considered.

In fact, this idea had been mooted long before the 1996 elections, but not by the PDS itself. On the contrary, it was a scenario which the leadership had consistently rejected, although recognizing the strength of the argument. The argument was that, after the 1994 elections, the PDS, paradoxically, constituted both a source of strength and weakness on the left. On the one hand, the 1994 elections confirmed that the PDS was the only substantial organization on the left, having approximately 700,000 members and commandeering something like 80% of all left-of-centre electoral support. It had, therefore, to be the linchpin of any future electoral victory. At the same time, however, this organizational and electoral strength prompted considerable divisions on the left, undermining any moves towards either a permanent alliance or a new party. This was because the smaller parties all feared being dominated by the PDS, if not absorbed by it. Moreover, their fear of a close alliance with the PDS was based not simply on the fear of being dominated or absorbed by a larger partner, but rather the specific partner involved: a party, it was argued, which had evident continuities with an organization (the PCI) whose very essence was anathema to almost all of them.

These continuities could evidently be seen in the PDS's symbol, an oak tree, at the base of which sat the PCI's old symbol, the hammer and sickle, a symbol, moreover, over which the PDS had taken Communist Refoundation to court to prevent its use by any other party but the PDS. Yet, the argument went much beyond this. Indeed, it was argued that the transformation so boldly initiated by Occhetto between 1989 and 1991 had failed. True, a radical break with the past had been enacted but the new party had subsequently failed to attract into its ranks a substantial body of members who were not ex-communists. Consequently, the internal dynamics of the party had been captured by old party *apparatchiks*, and the debate about the left had been suffocated by old-style communist factionalism, something which was paradoxically exacerbated by the moves towards a more open democratic party. Indeed, the deep divisions which were prompted by Occhetto's original proposal to dissolve the PCI were faithfully carried over into the new party. As a consequence, the identity of the PDS remained unclear, with a number of militants still maintaining a belief in the party's *diversità* or 'distinctiveness' from other parties (Bull 1994).

It was argued, therefore, that the PDS was not an organization which had the capability of attracting, as Occhetto had imagined, disillusioned ex-

socialist voters, progressive Catholics, the so-called 'lost left' (disillusioned with both socialism and communism) and newly-enfranchised voters, at the same time as holding onto erstwhile faithful communist supporters. Indeed, the failure of the PCI-PDS transformation, coupled with the dramatic changes in Italian politics, had simply exacerbated the fragmentation of the left, multiplying the number of small parties, some of which (the so-called *cespugli* or 'shrubs') had subsequently forged an unsatisfactory alliance with the PDS.

For many, the only solution to this problem was to dissolve the PDS's organization and build a new party from scratch. This was something which, until the elections of 1996, the party refused to countenance. As new leader in 1994, Massimo D'Alema had launched the idea of a 'coalition of democrats', and he had accompanied this with programmatic renewal which he dubbed a 'liberal revolution' (embodying a rejection of old-style statism in the management of the economy and in welfare provision, and a greater reliance on market mechanisms regulated by public authorities), but neither of these embodied a superseding of the PDS. The formation of the *Ulivo* about eighteen months later could be seen as a variant of his objective of a coalition of democrats. The *Ulivo's* 1996 victory, however, rather than ending the debate over the future of the PDS, simply took it one stage further, raising the question of how the successful progress since 1994 could be further consolidated. At the same time, the victory sharpened the debate as to the possible options to follow.

These options were broadly twofold. The first was to consolidate the experience of the *Ulivo* by attempting to transform it from an electoral/governing alliance into a genuine party. This would be a 'Democratic Party', possibly along the lines of the American model: i.e. one which incorporated all progressive strands of the centre and the more moderate left, and where ideology would play no part. The chief proponent of this view was Walter Veltroni, who, backed by Occhetto, had stood against D'Alema for the leadership of the party in the Summer of 1994 (Bull 1995b). Although the differences between the two candidates was barely visible (and declared to be so, the real division being rooted largely in personal animosity between Occhetto and D'Alema), Veltroni's objective of building a democratic party was reinforced by Romano Prodi's decision, after the April 1995 local elections, to designate him as his deputy prime ministerial candidate, and subsequently deputy Prime Minister itself, after the April 1996 victory.

The second option was that of building a new party which would be able to house all the strands of the Italian left into a genuine European social democratic party. The chief proponent of this view was D'Alema himself, whose power base rested mainly in the party (and through that the acquisition of other power bases such as the Presidency of the Bicameral Commission to reform the Constitution). He believed that the divisions in the *Ulivo* were evidence enough of the impossibility of building a single party of the centre-left. Moreover, he felt that in doing so the PDS would unwittingly continue the Italian anomaly: the absence of a left-wing social democratic reformist party characteristic of other European democracies. He did not doubt the view that the left could not govern alone, but argued that it should do so in the context of a governing alliance with the progressive centre, each retaining its distinctive autonomy.¹ At first sight, it might appear that D'Alema's position amounted to little more than a reiteration of the value of the PDS. After all the PDS had been born with largely similar reasoning in mind, and one could be forgiven for wondering what sort of 'new party of the left' could supersede the PDS. Yet, there were two differences in D'Alema's new vision, one of substance and one of method.

The first difference was the idea of harnessing a new party more firmly to the European model (such as one existed) of social democracy. It is important to note that, when the name 'Democratic Party of the Left' was first chosen by Occhetto and the leadership, it was predicated on avoiding a direct association with the social democratic tradition. Significantly, most west European communist parties who underwent similar transformations followed suit e.g. 'New Left', 'Democratic Left', 'Green Left' (Bull 1995a). In the case of the PDS, this was partly to try and shore up support from within the party (by avoiding direct accusations of 'social democratization') and partly because of the crisis of western social democracy, which was not perceived to be in much better condition than communism itself. Hence, the implication in the name that a different type of democratic left was to be attempted. D'Alema's proposal to build a new party which would sit in the mainstream of European social democracy was a recognition not only of the fact that no alternative models existed but also that it was not possible to attract other forces (and particularly former socialists) into a party founded on that basis. Indeed, his proposal has to be seen in the context of aspirations of ex-socialists, and notably former Prime Minister Giuliano Amato, to build a labour or social

democratic party. Significantly, when D'Alema first officially mooted the idea in July 1996, it was in the course of conversations with Amato and other ex-socialists.

The second difference concerned the method of proceeding, which had to ensure that the new party was genuinely 'new'. The founding of the PDS was clearly a radical break with the PCI; yet, as already suggested, the transformation was essentially an internal one-party affair and the continuities with the PCI were apparent. This time the constituent phase would not be characterized by a formal dissolution of the PDS 'into' *la cosa 2*; rather, the 2nd congress would *initiate* a constituent phase which would be characterized by the convening of the *stati generali della sinistra*, a form of convention or assembly in which all relevant parties and forces would participate to create a new party. This process was begun before the congress in December 1996 through the founding of the so-called 'Forum of the Left' (*Forum della sinistra*). The implication, then, was that the PDS would formally be dissolved as soon as the new party was agreed upon.

In short, the development of the left in particular and the Italian party system in general in the period from an election defeat (1994) to an election victory (1996) led the PDS leadership into concluding that uniting the progressive forces of Italian society under one party could only be achieved by going beyond the PDS itself. The key issue on which the congress was expected to have to decide, therefore, was the broad nature of this new political force: social democratic or *ulivista*?

3. The 2nd. Congress: the End of the PDS

As it turned out, however, no such decision was needed, and the congress, from the point of view of *cosa 2*, turned into something of a damp squib. The main reason for this was some pre-congressional manoeuvring on the part of D'Alema and the decision of the *ulivisti* not to make a stand on the issue. In a manner worthy of his political upbringing in a communist party machine, D'Alema engaged in a classic manoeuvre of signing (and thus effectively 'absorbing') the most significant amendment of Veltroni and Occhetto, an amendment which, in its deliberate ambivalence, was prone to this sort of move. This infuriated Occhetto who accused the party leader of trying to

install practices reminiscent of democratic centralism. Veltroni's response was muted. Ever the diplomat, he has, from the moment he stood against D'Alema for the leadership, made it apparent that he does not wish to become the focus of opposition to the leader, a position subsequently reinforced when he became Deputy Prime Minister.

The result of D'Alema's manoeuvre was that he arrived at the Congress with the support of 98% of the party sections, and a typically anodyne congressional motion which, while leaving open different possibilities, had the evident stamp of D'Alema's idea of a social democratic party on it (PDS 1996). There was an entire section of the motion devoted to the *Ulivo*, which stressed its significance to the Italian transition (largely in promoting bipolarisation) and the need for it to be further consolidated. This was not just rhetoric either, since there were concrete suggestions as to how this could occur: through the development of *Ulivo* territorial organs, the convening of an *Ulivo* national convention, and the designing of a democratic method for choosing *Ulivo* candidates. At the same time, however, it was emphasized that 'it is not a matter of considering the *Ulivo* as a political party' (PDS 1996: 4). D'Alema, in his address to the congress, emphasized this point, saying that while he did not exclude the idea that the *Ulivo* would ever become a political party, the time was certainly not ripe at present.

Hence, in the same motion an emphasis was placed on the need for *una nuova forza della sinistra*. The congressional motion drew attention to the historic contribution of Occhetto's *svolta* of 1989, but recognized that its chief objective of uniting the left into a single organization had not been achieved. Consequently, there was a need for a new type of party, one which would unite all the forces of the Italian left and which would therefore reinforce the left's presence in government, promote alternation in power, and thus complete the Italian transition; for while it was true that the left was presently in government, its fragmentation was a factor which weakened both it and Italian democracy (PDS: 6-8).

To whom precisely this appeal was directed was not specified, but it evidently embraced a whole range of new and old parties (and individuals), representatives of which were invited to the congress. These included the *socialisti*, *socialisti democratici*, *laburisti*, *riformisti*, *cristiano-sociali*, *comunisti unitari*, *verdi* and other *ambientalisti*, *repubblicani* and other *laici*,

and members of the *popolari* and *Rifondazione comunista*. Evidently, in producing the document, the PDS was aware that one of the key future problems lies with *Rifondazione*, a party which has been a thorn in the flesh of the PDS since its birth, and which, despite the former's support for the Prodi government, has constituted the main source of tension because of its opposition to several of the government's policies. The congressional document was explicit enough to recognize that in Italy there were now 'two lefts' (*due sinistre*) but suggested that, because their 'political horizon' was the same, the more radical of the two lefts needed to undergo 'a progressive evolution of its positions if it is not to remain marginal to the political and social developments in course' (PDS 1996: 8).

Little was said about the likely nature of the new party, although some innovations were suggested, such as a federal organization, collective forms of membership, association for individual campaigns and projects, and permanent forms of consultation with members through the use of advanced technology. Furthermore, changes to the PDS's statute itself, approved by the congress, also give some idea of the innovations in mind. To many it must have seemed curious that a party destined to disappear should have been designing a new statute at its last, or penultimate, congress. However, what was clear from the speech given by the coordinator of the party executive, Marco Minniti, was that, while the PDS would not attempt to impose any 'pre-determined' models on *cosa 2*, there needed to be continual experimentation and innovation by all parties.

Consequently, various changes were made to the party statute, including: the election of the leader and the *direzione* by secret ballot by the congress; the abolition of the *Consiglio nazionale* and its replacement with an annual assembly of the party's 1131 delegates; the right of 'cultural and political components' to formal organizational structures and central financing; considerable autonomy for regional federations (including their own statutes); the possibility of creating party units dedicated to specific themes; the possibility of collective (i.e. en bloc) memberships; and the constitution of a Research Foundation for developing the party programme. All of these changes suggest an attempt to go beyond the traditional ideological-organizational party form and develop the PDS into an open, programmatically and culturally pluralist party. The party leadership may not be so ambitious as to expect the other political forces simply to adopt the new

PDS as the new party, but they are hoping that the very efforts made by the PDS will influence the debate and convince others of the sincerity of their intentions.

The manner in which the congress itself was presented was also designed to reinforce this impression. For the first time in party history, the large stage, which traditionally separates the leadership and speakers from the delegates, was abandoned. The circular EUR building in Rome was exploited fully, the speakers delivering their speeches from a (slightly) raised podium in the centre of the arena. The leadership sat at several tables in the arena behind the podium, the delegates in chairs spanning out in front of the podium, and the rest in the raised areas of the building. The leader did not, as tradition used to dictate, give the first and last speeches; rather, D'Alema let Veltroni give the opening address while he formally closed the conference. The slogan of the congress was 'Il futuro entra in noi molto prima che accade', a line from a poem by Rainer Maria Rilke who died in 1926, and the congressional 'anthem' 'Un canto, e cantata per l'Europa' by Di Ennio Morricone, neither of which conjured up images associated with *Bandiera Rossa* and the *Internazionale*, neither of which appeared in the congress's official programme, although the leadership eventually relented on the latter, and it was played after D'Alema's speech. There was also an interactive net site available, which allowed many militants to follow the congress from afar (<http://www.pds.it>). Forty year olds in sharp suits holding *telefonini* was one of the enduring images of the congress: 'il ceto medio a congresso', as *La Repubblica* described it.² This image was reinforced by the contrast with old PCI congresses, parts of which were re-shown (in black and white) on the video screen.

If this were all designed to make the PDS appear more open and democratic, the paradox was the absence of any substantial opposition to the party line, something which was reminiscent of (most) PCI congresses, and which, amidst accusations of a *maggioranza bulgara* ('Bulgarian majority') began to embarrass D'Alema and the leadership. Occhetto (perhaps thinking of the baptism of fire of the 1st. Congress over which he presided), constituted a rare critical voice of this situation, indicating that real democratic parties usually vote on different motions. The leadership was at pains to stress that the few amendments to be voted upon (e.g. welfare, institutional reform), would, with some other issues, constitute lively debate. In fact, this turned out to be truer than they expected or wanted, as the leader of the main left-wing trade

union (CGIL), Sergio Cofferati, blew apart the synthetic unity of the congress through an intervention which focused not on the issue of the future of the PDS but on the policies that the party was following in government.

Indeed, if one is looking for a second reason (besides D'Alema's pre-congressional manoeuvring) for the marginalisation of *cosa 2* as an issue at the congress, it was because this was the first congress held by the PDS-PCI while in government. Past congresses were characterized by a good deal of navel-gazing, something which was largely a product of the absence of any governing responsibility, and the unlikelihood that such a responsibility would arise in the near future. On this occasion, however, the dominant issues that came to the fore were not so much to do with the PDS itself as with the party's role as the largest party in government. These issues ranged from the reform of the welfare state (and particularly pensions), public expenditure cuts, unemployment, relations with *Rifondazione comunista* and the *Polo*, and institutional reform. Hence, the significance of Veltroni (the Deputy Prime Minister) giving the first address: it was a vivid reminder of the fact that the PDS was now a party of government.

Yet, this also brought with it inevitable problems. The main dilemma for the PDS was defending, as a party of the left, what is a largely centrist government (in terms of the people in the key ministries), and whose action, since the election, has been largely dictated by the need to meet the Maastricht convergence criteria in time for European Monetary Union. This has raised big questions which are as yet not fully resolved, such as reforming the welfare state and pensions system and introducing flexibility in work patterns. Broadly speaking, whatever the rhetoric surrounding these sort of reforms (e.g. 'changing from a welfare system of guarantees to a welfare system of opportunities', PDS: 6) they entail cuts in public expenditure and a reduction in some of the rights of employed workers traditionally protected by the trade unions. Veltroni, for example, in mentioning the *bête noire* of the trade unions (*flessibilità*) stated that 'We cannot continue to think that it may be better to sacrifice to an abstract principle of equality the need to provide work for fifteen months to a twenty five year old...'³

As a consequence, the main division which emerged at the congress was not so much organizational or ideological as one concerned with policy or programme. In a speech which was deeply critical of both Veltroni's address

and government policy, Sergio Cofferati indicated that the CGIL could not be counted on to accept a rolling back of its workers' hard-earned rights simply because the *Ulivo* was in office. He accused the government of treating the issue of employment like 'a cinderella', having failed to create a single extra job since being elected. He also warned that the welfare state could be touched only on the basis of equality and development, and flexibility in work practices could be developed only within existing contractual regulations. He appealed to Veltroni not to fall into the camp of 'false innovators.' This breach in the congress's apparent unity opened the way for several members of the party's left (as well as the leader of *Rifondazione*, Bertinotti) to reinforce Cofferati's sentiments.

Moreover, the issue became so prominent that it constrained D'Alema into replying in his closing address. His reply was uncompromising, indicating that, if the party listened to Cofferati, it ran the risk of representing only a segment of the labour force, and that certain reforms and innovations had to be carried through. The fact that D'Alema went over and embraced Cofferati after his speech could not mask the line he had drawn between them: the *statista sociale* would be reformed whatever the opposition from the trade unions. Despite eleventh hour efforts by the leadership to reach a compromise on the wording of the part of the final resolution relevant to welfare, a division could not be prevented, and a hundred members of the left signed an alternative document.

This division significantly influenced the outcome of the congress in terms of reshaping the PDS's internal balance of power. D'Alema was re-elected leader with 88.19% of the vote, 10.5% less than the congressional motion had received from the party sections before the congress. Furthermore, 33 delegates voted against the final motion of the congress (including the symbolic leader of the left, Aldo Tortorella), and 41 abstained. Sergio Sabbatini announcing the formation of a internal faction against the Veltroni-D'Alema axis. In short, the 1996 election victory and the PDS's participation in government (which created the *ulivisti*), combined with the clash at the 2nd. congress between the *dalemiani* and a significant part of the left, have reshaped the internal party struggle, something confirmed by the election of the new *direzione*, which resulted in 60 (70%) *dalemiani*, 11 (12%) *ulivisti* and 16 (18%) of the *sinistra*.

The congress, then, witnessed a shift in the supporting component of the leadership. The *ulivisti*, who largely developed out of the old *occhettiani*, and who arrived at the congress in quiet opposition to some of the leaders' views, ended up giving D'Alema their unqualified support, as expressed by Claudio Petruccioli at the congress. This, it seems, was largely on the grounds that they had secured an important achievement on institutional reform (and specifically on the PDS's proposed new electoral system). Whether this represented faithfully the views of all the *ulivisti* is less clear (certainly, Occhetto had considerable reservations about Petruccioli's statement), but it signals the possible emergence of a new *dalemiani-ulivisti* axis. The left, meanwhile, whose support had ensured D'Alema's victory over Veltroni in the Summer of 1994, has now moved into opposition, although to what extent it will be able to act as a coherent whole remains open to question. These changes should not hide the extent to which D'Alema and the *dalemiani* now have an unrivalled command over the leadership of the party.

4. Conclusion: the Future of the Left

The 2nd. Congress marked the formal passing of the PDS, and the timetable from the congress to the formation of the new party is fairly clear, if rather ambitious. The *Forum della sinistra* will have five working sessions, each with a different theme which will attempt to reach an agreement on the essential programmatic and organizational issues. Immediately afterwards, in a final meeting to be held in May, an appeal will be launched to all the prospective forces of the new party for the convening of an assembly to constitute the new party in the summer, such that it will be in a position to campaign in the local elections later in the year.

To what extent this process will be successful remains an open question. It is perhaps significant that the leaders of the other two main currents of the left (Boselli of the Italian Socialists and Bertinotti of *Rifondazione*) have both refused to participate, the first on the grounds that the 'socialist question' (i.e. the unity of socialists) has to be resolved first before 'meeting the ex-communists', the latter on the basis that the 2nd congress has simply confirmed the increasingly centrist orientation of the PDS ('After this speech [D'Alema's] I would say that the differences [between the two parties] have been accentuated' Bertinotti commented⁵). There is the evident danger that the

process, even if not delayed, will become once again largely an internal party affair, and the PDS may pay for not having given greater attention to this key issue at the 2nd Congress, particularly as there are clear differences between several of the groups. The Social Christians, for example, are opposed to any organization which sits too far to the left (even to the point of being opposed to the inclusion of the word 'socialist' in the title of the new party), while the United Communists want to push the new party as far to the left as possible to attract in *Rifondazione comunista*.

At the same time, the PDS will bring its own divisions into the new party, which were publicly displayed at the congress. These are real divisions which have both political and social dimensions and which interrelate with differences between the PDS and others (see Pasquino 1997). Having said this the nature of those divisions may constitute a significant development in the PDS, and one which augurs well for *cosa 2*. For the first time in the PDS/PCI's history, the divisions inside the party appear to be much more clearly based on differences over policy and programme, rather than simply reflecting old ideological battle lines concerning the identity of the party and which can be traced back to the PCI. In a certain sense, this congress was a real victory for D'Alema in placing the PDS at the centre of the modernization process in Italy. If there was a clear message that came over it was that the road to progressive political, social and economic reform in Italy cannot be divorced from the PDS's presence in government (see Scalfari 1997), and that programmatic differences were not only healthy but should be at the heart of the party's activities (see Salvati 1997). Moreover, the PDS was prepared to reform itself further in order to meet its responsibilities - even to the point of enacting a process to supersede itself by another party. The old ideological battles may not be completely dead, but they are becoming increasingly marginal to left-wing politics in Italy.

Notes

-
- ¹ For the leader's views see D'Alema (1995) and D'Alema 1997 (a collection of his recent speeches).
 - ² *La Repubblica* 24 February 1997, p. 6; except the newspaper did not refer to *telefonini*, an observation derived from the author's attendance at the congress!
 - ³ Quoted in *L'Unità*, 23 February 1997, p. 4.
 - ⁴ Of the 1050 delegates entitled to vote 926 voted for D'Alema, 70 against with 48 abstentions and 6 leaving their ballot papers blank. These figures indicate that not all of the left who signed the alternative document voted against D'Alema.
 - ⁵ Quoted in *La Repubblica*, 23 February 1997, p. 3.



EUI WORKING PAPERS

EUI Working Papers are published and distributed by the
European University Institute, Florence

Copies can be obtained free of charge
– depending on the availability of stocks – from:

The Publications Officer
European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I-50016 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)
Italy

Please use order form overleaf

Publications of the European University Institute

To The Publications Officer
European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I-50016 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI) – Italy
Telefax No: +39/55/4685 636
E-mail: publish@datacomm.iue.it

From Name

 Address

- Please send me a complete list of EUI Working Papers
- Please send me a complete list of EUI book publications
- Please send me the EUI brochure Academic Year 1997/98

Please send me the following EUI Working Paper(s):

No, Author

Title:

No, Author

Title:

No, Author

Title:

No, Author

Title:

Date

Signature

Working Papers in Political and Social Sciences
Published since 1992

SPS No. 96/1

Yossi SHAVIT/
Karin WESTERBEEK
Stratification in Italy: An Investigation
of Failed Reforms

SPS No. 96/2

Adrienne HÉRITIER
The Accommodation of Diversity in
European Policy Making and its
Outcomes: Regulatory Policy as a
Patchwork

SPS No. 96/3

Daniel VERDIER
Gerschenkron on his Head: Banking
Structures in 19th-Century Europe,
North America, and Australasia

SPS No. 96/4

Daniel VERDIER
Democratization and Trade
Liberalization in Industrial Capitalist
Countries

SPS No. 96/5

Daniel VERDIER
Democratic Convergence and Free
Trade

SPS No. 96/6

Christian JOPPKE
Nation-Building after World War Two:
Postcolonialism, Postcommunism, and
Postfascism Compared

SPS No. 96/7

Takis S. PAPPAS
Grand Design, Narrow Choices:
Conservatives and Democracy in
Southern Europe

SPS No. 96/8

Arpád SZAKOLCZAI/László FÜSTÖS
Value Systems in Axial Moments: A
Comparative Analysis of 24 European
Countries

SPS No. 96/9

Arpád SZAKOLCZAI
In a Permanent State of Transition:
Theorising the East European Condition

SPS No. 96/10

Paolo DONATI
Environmentalism, Postmaterialism, and
Anxiety: The New Politics of
Individualism

SPS No. 96/11

Arpád SZAKOLCZAI
Durkheim, Weber and Parsons and the
Founding Experiences of Sociology

SPS No. 96/12

Christoph KNILL
Patterns of European Policy
Development: The Case of Clean Air
Policy

SPS No. 96/13

Jocelyn EVANS
Conceptualising the Left-Right
Continuum as an Enduring Dimension
of Political Competition

* * *

SPS No. 97/1

Jean-Pierre CASSARINO
The Theories of Ethnic Entrepreneur-
ship, and the Alternative Arguments of
Social Action and Network Analysis

SPS No. 97/2

Harald WYDRA
Imitating Capitalism and Democracy at
a Distance - Identifying with Images in
the Polish Transition

SPS No. 97/3

Martin J. BULL
From PDS to *Cosa 2*: The Second
Congress of the Democratic Party of the
Left

* out of print

© The Author(s), European University Institute.

Digitised version produced by the EUI Library in 2020. Available Open Access on Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository.





