

# U.S.' heavy hand opens door for Italy's Reds

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ROME — The United States, which has long fought to prevent a Communist takeover in Italy, has provided ammunition for a possible Communist victory in this weekend's Italian elections.



Giovanni Leone

involved.

In addition, congressional investigators' reports showing that the CIA has been trying to influence Italian elections for nearly 30 years could help the Communists.

Whether it wants to be or not, the United States is up to its ears in the Italian elections, which will determine whether Communists will receive a share of power in a major Western democracy for the first time in history.

In the Lockheed case it was bribery, to get contracts for 14 giant C-130 cargo planes.

Also, the United Brands Co., a U.S. multinational corporation, was charged with bribing Italian politicians "to secure favorable business opportunities," apparently to sell bananas.

Questionable U.S. payments, both bribery by private firms and political intervention by the CIA, have emerged as one of the hottest issues in the Italian campaign.

President Giovanni Leone and Foreign Minister Mariano Rumor are under suspicion as possible beneficiaries of payoffs from Lockheed Aircraft Corp. Other major U.S. corporations also are in-

Then there were oil company scandals, exposed by a U.S. Senate subcommittee, involving Exxon, Amoco, Gulf, Mobil, Texaco and Chevron.

They set up a payoff scheme to Italian political parties and politicians, operating through a trade association. Even some Italian cabinet ministers were on the take.

Exxon distributed nearly \$50 million. The exact purpose of these payoffs has never been made clear, and Exxon insists that it doesn't know where all the money went. But Senate investigators turned up an elaborate scheme by which Exxon doctored its books to conceal payments.

Senate investigators also were able to show a pattern by which some payoffs were made at times when the Italian government was considering specific policies or legislation.

The biggest of the scandals, however, came earlier this year when it was established that the CIA had been trying to buy Italian elections, and politicians.

A House Intelligence Committee report said the United States pumped about \$10 million to Italian political parties, affiliated organizations and individual candidates in the last national elections, in 1972.

It estimated that the CIA had secretly put at least \$65 millions more into Italian political campaigns in the previous 20 years.

Although the committee's report was never published officially by the House, its accuracy on spending in Italian elections has not been contested.

The result has been to make corruption a major issue of the Italian campaign. The Communists have adopted the slogan "Our Hands Are Clean" which means clean of the taint of U.S. money.

Says Enrico Berlinguer, Communist party leader: "The eruption of one scandal after another reveals how deeply corruption has penetrated into public life, into the structure of the state, into the men and parties that have made up the governments led by the Christian Democrats."

The Christian Democrats have ruled Italy for 30 years.