

## Veronica. Mission Impossible

FROM ITALY BY Maria Rita Latto (October 08, 2007)



Walter Veltroni, future leader of the newborn Italian Democratic Party, courts, politically of course, Veronica Lario, wife of Silvio Berlusconi, the well-known leader of the Center Right alliance

Mission impossible (apparently) for Walter Veltroni, future leader of the newborn Italian Democratic Party. He courts, politically of course, Veronica Lario, wife of Silvio Berlusconi, the well-known leader of the Center Right alliance. In fact, during an interview to a weekly magazine, Veltroni, reaching the highest level of his specialty that in Italian is called "inciucio" (that is: ecumenism at any cost), stated that the DP needs a female element like Mrs Berlusconi, having, in his words, "cultural curiosities, an open mind and a great intellectual autonomy". Such a statement inevitably aroused a number of furious responses from many women belonging to the Center-Left alliance, who felt neglected by Mr Veltroni, and saw in his statement an unscrupulous marketing operation, a way to increase his visibility in the Italian political panorama at the expenses of his fellow female militants,



not able, at his eyes, to fill the gap. A dangerous move made by Veltroni a few days before the primaries.

Silvio Berlusconi's reaction was to thank his opponent, even if he is sure that his wife will refuse such a proposal, due to her well-known restrained style.

And Veronica? Well, she has not yet replied to Veltroni's offer, but some of her close friends bet that she will give an answer in a not well specified future.

A mysterious figure, Mrs Berlusconi, rarely seen at her husband's side in official and also unofficial occasions. A reserved person who, to her regret, was often under the spotlight. In 2002, for example, when Berlusconi was still the Italian Prime Minister, he replied in a playful (not too much indeed) way to the rumors of a flirt between his wife and Massimo Cacciari, the philosopher mayor of Venice, asking the Danish Prime Minister, Rasmussen, if it would be appropriate to introduce that "poor woman" (Veronica) to him, since after all he is a "handsome man, even better than Mr Cacciari". Apart from the usual Berlusconi gaffe, one of the many, indeed, there is the fact that Mrs. Berlusconi can be defined in many ways, but not a "poor woman". In fact, in many occasions she showed that she is able to walk on her own legs and that she has clear ideas on where she wants to go. For example, when her husband as Prime Minister wanted to convince the Italians that the war in Iraq was right, she agreed the same day to giving an interview to a magazine that belongs to that part of the opposition that is strongly against her husband. That interview had the form of a dialogue between mothers "against the war of Bush". A clear act of a not "pacifist" attitude towards her husband and his "dear American friend". The "poor woman"'s personality came out again when, while her husband, still as the Italian Prime Minister, was defending himself against a satiric play of the Nobel prize Dario Fo that harshly attacked him, she declared that the satire is "only a game" and that "censorship is horrible and unjust". Till the last episode, perhaps the worst, when her husband was openly courting some attractive female parliamentarians and in front of the journalists was trying to imagine his life if he had not been married. A clear example of male vanity that unfortunately is still very spread among the Italian men. Luckily, Veronica's personality came out again, and a public letter addressed to her husband published by one of the major national papers, revenged the honor of Italian women, too many times humiliated by their men, whose main sport is still the same: playing the part of the irresistible playboy or, as they say in Naples, "spararsi le pose". In that letter Veronica was asking respect and expecting the excuses, that punctually arrived with a reply on the same paper in the form of a letter written by rather embarrassed husband.

Now the union between Veronica and Silvio seems to be facing a new obstacle: the public esteem statement by Walter Veltroni. Will Veronica agree in giving her contribution to the Democratic Party?

Another doubt is if Veltroni, after all this, will obtain the expected strong victory as the future leader of the Democratic Party during the primaries that will take place the next 14 October.

All the rumors around Walter and Veronica shifted the attention from the contents, the proposals the ideas of the candidates of the new Party and made many militants of it rather upset. In fact, it is impossible not to notice a contrast between the slogan of the Democrats, "New Ideas for the Primaries" and the question rising spontaneously: "Hey, Walter, would Veronica Berlusconi be a new idea?"

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...and Veronica said "no" to Walter Veltroni's proposal. After needing a few days to "think it over," her answer arrived during an interview with "Corriere della Sera", where she stated that on October 14th she

will not vote in the Democratic Party primaries. "As the wife of "the opposition leader," she said, "I have a role, and I respect it."



There are limits and it is impossible to go beyond them." Of course Veronica appreciated Veltroni's "courtesy." Then, she noticed that in Italy we've been living in a "wall against wall" climate for years

that needs to end as soon as possible. Mrs. Berlusconi's opinion is that this situation damaged Italy, and that there is fortunatley a person like Walter Veltroni, who is animated by a true political

passion and the idea that dialogue is fundamental in politics. Well, after declaring total agreement with and admiration for the mayor of Rome, words indeed never expressed towards her own husband, it appears clear that, at this point, Veronica's vote in the primaries is absolutely superfluous...

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