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NSC BRIEFING

9 March 1960

ITALY

- I. Premier Segni's resignation on 24 February precipitated what may be the most important political crisis in post-war Italy.
  - A. For the seventh time since 1953 the Christian Democrats must look to other parties for a parliamentary majority, and protracted negotiations are in prospect.
- II. Segni's all-Christian Democratic cabinet had depended on the three rightist parties--Liberals, monarchists, and neo-Fascists.
  - A. The Liberals withdrew support on 21 February rather than support a government which appeared to be moving toward a rapprochement with the Nenni Socialists.
  - B. Segni did not want Christian Democrats to face the spring nationwide local elections while dependent on the two parties of the extreme right.
- III. Christian Democratic leaders have indicated privately to embassy officials that they are working up to formation of a center-left government with the Democratic Socialists and Republicans, dependent on Nenni Socialist parliamentary abstention for a working majority.
  - A. They believe that formation of the old pre-Segni quadripartite with Social Democrats, Republicans, and Liberals is blocked by Democratic Socialist leader Saragat's refusal to join a government with the Liberals.

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- B. The Christian Democratic left wing (including President Gronchi), the Democratic Socialists, and the Republicans, favor such a center-left government because they believe it would give a stable majority.
- C. The Nenni Socialists have announced that they will support a government disassociated from the Right.
1. Nenni, 69, is anxious for eventual cabinet post, which postwar association with Communists has little chance to give him.
  2. Revelations at CPSU's 20th party congress, and Hungarian uprising sharpened his split with PCI.
  3. While Nenni's group in PSI has control of party machinery; the party's funds still come largely from municipal governments, cooperatives etc., where PSI participates jointly with Communists.
  4. His public announcements of unwillingness to take "anti-Communist" line probably meant to allay fears of electoral supporters that a move too far to right would endanger workers' unity.
- D. The Communists fear isolation. They have announced their support for such a center-left government in hopes of killing a rapprochement between Nenni and the Christian Democrats.
- IV. The Christian Democratic right wing may prefer to torpedo a center-left government from within, as it did with Fanfani, rather than take the dangerous step of splitting the party to prevent it.

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