

NSC Briefing

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PARLIAMENT DEFEATS DE GASPERI'S PROPOSED CABINET

Premier de Gasperi's proposed all-Christian Democratic cabinet missed a vote of confidence from the 590-man Chamber of Deputies by 282 to 263, with 8 absentees and 37 abstentions. The latter came from the minor democratic parties who were joined in a bloc with De Gasperi's Christian Democrats in the June national elections. Support for De Gasperi came entirely from the Christian Democratic parliamentary group, which comprises 263 Christian Democrats and 2 South Tyrolean deputies. He has accordingly submitted his formal resignation once more. De Gasperi now has three choices:

- (1) calling for new elections;
- (2) stepping down to let someone else try to form a government;
- (3) trying once more to form his own government if--as is expected--the president asks him to.

The argument for new elections has been that some of the voters who, in the June elections, cast protest ballots for the extreme right or left, might this time vote for the government in order to avoid political chaos. Against this is the fact that another election, presumably not until after the fall harvest, would be expensive and exhausting, and would risk another government defeat.

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Such a defeat appears likely in view of the fact that the proposed cabinet was more rightist than the previous one, ignored the leftist electoral trend and was offensive to anti-clericals and non-Christian Democrats in general. Furthermore, the government's prestige on the Trieste issue has fallen still lower now that the Italian people have learned of the Yugoslav talks in Washington.

De Gasperi has indicated a strong aversion to alliance with the Monarchists, which he feels would block reform and dangerously increase nationalist and neo-Fascist influence on the government. He might well step down rather than make such a move, even to secure the support of 40 deputies. There would then be two possibilities:

- (1) a more leftist government under Christian Democrats Fanfani or Gronchi;
- (2) a more rightist government, with Monarchist blessing, under Christian Democrats Piccioni or Pella.

De Gasperi might prefer to step down with the hope of re-emerging with greater prestige if another premier should fail to hold the government together.

Latest press reports subsequent to De Gasperi's 28 July parliamentary defeat indicate that he will continue his center line, bowing neither to the right nor the left blocs.

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This has been taken to mean that he or another member of his party would try to form a center coalition, which to date has proved impossible. The Social Democrats, the largest of the minor democratic parties, have announced that he could have their 19 votes only by including elements of the Nenni Socialists in the government. The latter's 75 seats, plus Social Democratic support, would give De Gasperi strong parliamentary backing, even if the right wing of his own party should bolt. The left-center wing of his own party, which emerged strengthened as a result of the elections, has strongly supported such a move as a means of avoiding a clerical government with a consequent strong popular reaction toward communism.

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