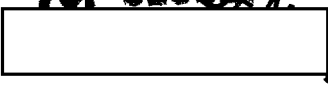


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SUMMARY OF THE CURRENT ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION

Appraisal of the forthcoming local elections in southern Italy:

The diminishing popularity of Premier de Gasperi's Christian Democratic Party has tended to strengthen the two political extremes in Italy at the expense of the middle-of-the-road groups. All the evidence suggests a loss of votes by the Christian Democrats in the forthcoming local elections to both the Communists and, to an even greater extent, the neo-Fascists (MSI) on the extreme right.

The results may be similar to those of last year's regional elections in Sicily, when Communist gains were such as to balance exactly the strength of the Christian Democrats in the Sicilian Regional Assembly, leaving the neo-Fascists and Monarchists holding the balance of power. This would stimulate a popular protest vote in favor of the Communists in the national elections planned for late 1952 or early 1953.

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Despite the neo-Fascist claim to anti-Communism, [redacted] both groups would welcome a modus vivendi. There are also indications that the Catholic Action, which exerted important influence in swinging the 1949 elections to the Christian Democrats, is not anxious to support de Gasperi in the forthcoming local elections and may desert him completely in the national elections if his party makes a poor showing in the balloting starting 25 May.

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Relative strength of the parties:

Loss of support for the Christian Democrats was evident in the 1951 local elections in north Italy, when they won 39 percent of the votes, compared with 48.5 in the 1948 national election and 36.5 in the 1946 local elections. The Communists and Nenni Socialists together won 35.2 percent compared with 34.9 in 1948 and 48.8 in 1946. The Monarchists and MSI combined won 4.7 percent compared with 2.0 in 1948 and 3.5 in 1946. The MSI alone more than trebled its strength from 1.2 percent in 1948 to 3.8 in 1951.

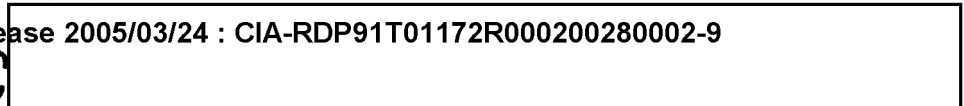
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Despite their loss of popular support in the 1951 elections, the Christian Democrats were able through the use of linked lists to gain control of the municipal councils in most of the large cities in north and central Italy. In some of the south Italian cities such as Brindisi and Taranto, however, the Communists won a majority of seats.

Relations among the so-called democratic parties:

The only outside support of the Christian Democrats today is the leadership of the Republican Party, the single minority party left

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in the Cabinet "coalition", which now consists of Christian Democrats and two Republicans. However, the Christian Democrats have been successful in persuading not only the Republicans but also the Liberals, (Conservative), who quit the Cabinet in 1950, and the Democratic Socialists, who left in 1951, to agree in general to participate with them in an electoral bloc. These smaller parties have specified that they would link only in localities where the Christian Democrats have not allied themselves with the Monarchists. Premier de Gasperi has promised not to align his party with the neo-Fascist Italian Social Movement, following refusal of the Democratic Socialists to join his bloc otherwise.

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Because of the strength of the Monarchists and neo-Fascists and the weakness of the Democratic Socialists in Southern Italy, it is expected that the Christian Democrats will find it expedient to join with Monarchist groups in certain regions, with a corresponding loss of Democratic Socialist support. The neo-Fascists and Monarchists have lined up together. There have been inconclusive discussions of the possibility of an "anti-clerical" bloc of Liberals, Republicans and Democratic Socialists.

Weakness in the campaign of democratic parties:

In addition to the inherent weaknesses of their situation, the Christian Democrat and center parties have made specific blunders during past weeks. Foremost is the proposal by Don Sturzo, Catholic elder statesman, for a last-minute electoral alliance in Rome with the neo-Fascist and Monarchist group. Although Sturzo has withdrawn his suggestion, the damage done by his faux pas will make the public suspicious of possible future deals with the neo-Fascists. Moreover, Sturzo's action reveals the fear that grips the leadership of the democratic bloc.

The Christian Democrats have suffered damage from constant reference to the Western powers' 1948 pre-election announcement supporting the return of Trieste to Italy. They also appear unable to benefit from the present international discussions on Trieste. The right-wing bloc, on the other hand, is exploiting for its own ends the nationalist agitation that has spread throughout the country.

Another weakness is the ineptness of the government's announced labor policy, principally the pay raise bill, restrictions on labor unions, and proposals for a strictly Christian Democratic labor union.

Types of campaigning in progress:

Since the campaign got underway only in recent days, there have been few reports thus far that would give any specific indication of the campaign strategy of the various parties. From the limited evidence at hand, and from knowledge of tactics pursued in previous elections, it can be assumed that:

- 1) The Communists will continue to emphasize the "popular front" idea, by bringing into their fold non-Communist leaders like the elder

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statesman Nitti. They will capitalize on the popular desire for peace and avoidance of a third world war.

2) The Christian Democrats will continue to make use of the power and prestige of the Church; priests will admonish their parishioners to vote against Communism. The party will emphasize that unless the center stays in power, economic aid from the United States will cease. The Catholic Action will organize a campaign to get the Catholic voters to the polls.

3) The neo-Fascists will resort to bribery and intimidation. In particular, they will stress hypernationalism, neutralism, and anti-Communism.

There has been no evidence of any effective counter-propaganda by the democratic parties, which are notoriously slow to react.