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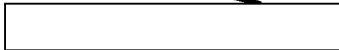
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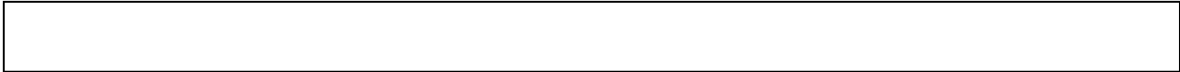
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Despite serious threats from the Nenni Socialists and the Monarchists, Premier de Gasperi's center electoral bloc is still expected to win the 7 June elections by a slim majority. (SEE CHART)



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DE GASPERI'S PROSPECTS ON THE EVE OF THE 7 JUNE ELECTIONS

Despite serious threats from the Nenni Socialists and the Monarchists, Premier de Gasperi's center electoral bloc is still expected to win the 7 June elections by a slim majority.

[redacted] serious post-electoral trouble for Premier de Gasperi in the Senate, however. If the extreme right were to gain a near balance-of-power position in this body, it would threaten both government stability and Italy's commitment to cooperation in Western defense.

The closing weeks of the Italian electoral campaign have been marked by strong drives by the Nenni Socialists on the left and the Monarchists on the right, and comparative apathy on the part of center elements. Both political extremes have been concentrating their invective on De Gasperi's Christian Democrats, evidently hoping to cut into the center's strength to an even greater extent than in the 1951-52 local elections (see chart, p.9). Both have been exploiting the government's inability to achieve a Trieste settlement, its failure to solve the country's economic problems, and the general unpopularity of the new electoral law which gives a bonus of lower house seats to the bloc winning even a bare popular majority.

The most serious threat to De Gasperi from the left springs from the Nenni Socialists, who are expected to improve their own 1951-52 showings and ensure that the Social-Communist alliance does not fall materially below the 35 percent of the vote which it polled then.

De Gasperi's chief danger from the right comes from the Monarchists, whose campaign has been even more effective than that of their neo-Fascist allies. Much of the Monarchist threat comes from the appeal to the 10,700,000 Italians who in 1946 voted to retain the king. This appeal is especially strong in the south, where the monarchy has traditionally been popular and where desperate poverty works against the government's plea for united anti-Communist support.

None of the three minor democratic parties allied with the Christian Democrats has drawn enthusiastic audiences. Of the three, the Liberals, who are the least closely associated with the present government, have shown the most strength and have the best chance to gain. All three evidently hold

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to their electoral alliance with De Gasperi mainly from fear of the Communists and neo-Fascists.

Public apathy has also disturbed top Christian Democratic leaders who have expressed fears of widespread absenteeism at the polls. Recently, however, Luigi Gedda, the authoritarian-minded leader of Catholic Action, who reportedly expects to exert a strong influence on a new Christian Democratic government, has put the movement's civic committees into vigorous action behind the Christian Democrats. The clergy have also given considerable indirect support from the pulpit.

Anticipation of a possible stalemate is suggested by the guarded overtures from leaders in several parties for new political alliances after the elections. Pietro Nenni announced that the Christian Democrats are a party with which his Socialists could collaborate and reportedly has sent an emissary to De Gasperi. Former Marshal Graziani, speaking for the neo-Fascists, also publicly praised the Christian Democratic record. On the Christian Democrat side, the party secretary has reportedly drawn up a plan for a post-election alliance with the Monarchists -- a scheme favored also by Gedda. De Gasperi himself, however, has been carefully neutral in his public utterances, and has concentrated instead on holding together the shaky center coalition.

Within the past few days, De Gasperi [redacted] predicted [redacted] that his coalition will win 52 or 53 percent of the vote. [redacted] latest estimate is a bare popular majority for De Gasperi's bloc, with the new electoral law then guaranteeing him easy control of the lower house. Since this law does not apply to the Senate, however, the Monarchists might still achieve something very close to a balance-of-power position there.

The premier himself seems to recognize that this parliamentary situation might confront him with the alternatives of allying himself with the Monarchists at the cost of defections by certain of his left and center supporters, or making a pact with Nenni at the cost of grave conflict within the Christian Democratic right wing.

De Gasperi [redacted] [redacted] would accept neither of these alternatives but would instead call new elections, presumably in the hope that some of those voting for the Monarchists in the June elections would be jolted into returning to the Christian Democratic fold. In any of these contingencies, however, a period of governmental instability would ensue.

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THE VOTING STRENGTH OF THE ITALIAN POLITICAL PARTIES

