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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

WEEKLY SUMMARY

Special Report

The Italian Presidential Election

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Balloting in the sixth election to the Italian presidency begins formally on 9 December and may last more than a week. The informal campaign has been under way for months. Senate President Fanfani and Foreign Minister Moro have been the principal unannounced contenders. Nonetheless, the Electoral College, composed primarily of members of Parliament, is as likely to choose one of its more obscure members. One of the clichés about Italian presidential elections is that "the front-runner never wins." The post is prized. It has more political bite than is normal for the job of chief of state in a parliamentary system, and the limits of presidential power seem fluid. The election takes place at a time when economic growth has reached a postwar low, neo-fascism is showing new strength, and a proposed referendum on divorce threatens to stir up hostility over religion all over again. One of the president's problems will be to weigh the pros and cons of calling early parliamentary elections.

The Electors and the Candidates

Over the past year, the approach of the presidential election has been a key factor in Italian political life. The president is not elected by all the people but by an Electoral College made up of members of Parliament and regional representatives. Leaders of the four center-left parties, all ambitious for the presidency, have been designing their activities with an eye to the Electoral College. Neither far-left nor far-right candidates have any hope of winning. Because the election is essentially parliamentary, the victor could be a politicians' politician almost as easily as one of the country's best-known leaders.

The Electoral College numbers 1,010. A two-thirds majority, or 672 votes, is required for election in the first three rounds of balloting. Thereafter, an absolute majority, or 506 votes, is sufficient. Over the years the election has been increasingly hard fought. In 1964, it took 13 days. Any Italian citizen over 50 who is qualified to vote may be elected to the seven-year office.

If the Christian Democratic Party were united, it could easily elect its own choice, accepting either Socialist or Social Democratic and Liberal votes to make up the required total of 506. The president would then owe nothing to either Communist or neo-fascist votes. In fact, the vote is secret, and the party has never been able to maintain complete unity. Only two of the five presidents have been Christian Democrats. One of these was elected in 1955 with Communist help; the other, in 1962, had aid from the neo-fascists.

The Christian Democrats this time seem to be in agreement on almost nothing, although they all say the new president should come from their party. One month before the balloting begins, the leading hopefuls of this party alone number seven. In addition, the Republicans have one, the Socialists have two or three, and the Social Democrats hope to re-elect incumbent President Saragat. All observers agree that the leading candidates are Christian Democrats. Senate President Amintore Fanfani is most prominently mentioned and Foreign Minister Aldo Moro is regarded as his chief rival. But they may cancel each other out, the reasoning goes, thus opening the way for a compromise candidate.

Fanfani, "the man to beat," is often described as unpredictable, and his critics call him

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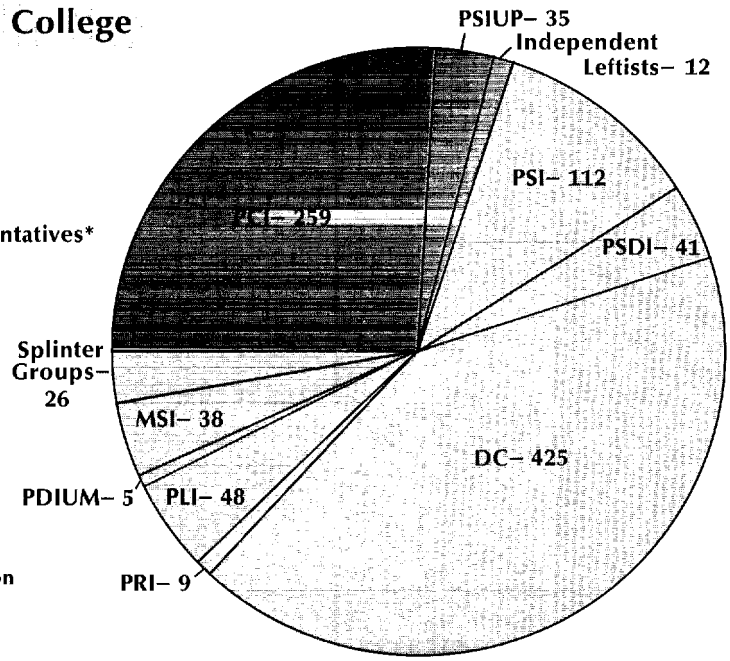
Italy: The Presidential Electoral College

	Parliament	Representatives*
Communists (PCI)	242	17
Proletarian Socialists (PSIUP)	34	1
Independent Leftists	12	–
Socialists (PSI)	99	13
Social Democrats (PSDI)	40	1
Christian Democrats (DC)	401	24
Republicans (PRI)	9	–
Liberals (PLI)	47	1
Monarchists (PDIUM)	5	–
Neo-Fascists (MSI)	38	–
Splinter Groups	25	1

*expected distribution



The College comprises 630 deputies, 322 senators, and 58 representatives of the 20 geographic regions (1 for the small Aosta Valley and 3 each for the other 19 regions). The regions choose their own delegates with a variety of systems but are required to give representation to opposition parties.

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unreliable. Everyone agrees that he is a highly skilled politician, but his authoritarian ways in past years have raised fears that as chief of state he would adapt the Republic to a presidency on the model of Gaullist France. Recently he has made an effort to show that he is not only a politician by stressing his not inconsiderable talents as a painter and a writer.

Fanfani has been a power in the Christian Democratic Party since the mid-1950s and has been a key figure in the last three presidential elections. Since consolidating his hold on the party machinery this fall, he is effectively the leader of the center and right of the party.

When he ran for the presidency in 1964, he had the support of the more revolutionary wing of the Communist Party, but this time he is looking to the far-right parties for the needed votes. Fanfani is likely to be named official candidate of his own party on the eve of the balloting, but other political leaders believe that he will get only 280-300 Christian Democratic votes at his peak. In this event, he cannot win even with the support of the entire right of the political spectrum and the Republicans and Social Democrats as well. The votes from the left that he would need do not at this moment seem in prospect.

Moro is Fanfani's chief rival for the presidency, as he has been for control of the Christian Democratic Party. A veteran prime minister, Moro demonstrated political skill, serving in that post three times, as Fanfani has also done.

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In contrast to the ebullient Senate president, Moro is "like the slow rain of autumn." As a speaker, he is "cold, piercing, insinuating, and interminable." One of his chief assets in the contest is his reputation as an enemy of activism. A party colleague has said, "He knows everything, he understands everything, but he decides nothing."

Moro's faction, one of nine in the Christian Democratic Party, was formerly located in the center of the party spectrum. But right-left orientation in Italian political parties is often tactical rather than ideological. Now, with Fanfani generally controlling the center and right, Moro has become the most important leader of the left.

Calculations of Moro's potential in the Electoral College give him perhaps 90 Christian Democratic votes, with a somewhat better chance than Fanfani of capturing the Socialist and extreme left votes. The foreign minister may also do better than his chief rival with the Social Democrats. Thus, Moro's election is a mathematical possibility. But any one of the parties or of the strong factions within them may vote in the initial balloting for one of its own members. One of the candidacies thus posed, perhaps originating as a temporizing measure, may survive and finally win while seemingly stronger candidates fall at unexpected hurdles.

Incumbent President Saragat at 73 could be re-elected. He apparently has supporters in every

PREVIOUS ITALIAN PRESIDENTS

Date of Election	28 June 1946	10-11 May 1948	28 April 1955	2-6 May 1962	16-28 December 1964
Winner					
	Enrico De Nicola (59)	Luigi Einaudi (74)	Giovanni Gronchi (68)	Antonio Segni (71)	Giuseppe Saragat (66)
Party	(Liberal Democratic)	(Liberal)	(Christian Democrat)	(official Christian Democratic candidate)	(Social Democrat)
Winning Ballot	First	Fourth	Fourth	Ninth	21st
Percent of Vote	80	57.5	78.8	51.8	67
Major Rivals	None	Carlo Sforza (official Christian Democratic candidate) V. E. Orlando (Liberal)	Cesare Merzagora (official Christian Democratic candidate) Luigi Einaudi (Liberal)	Giuseppe Saragat (Social Democrat)	Giovanni Leone (official Christian Democratic candidate) Amintore Fanfani (Christian Democrat) Pietro Nenni (Socialist)
Principal Previous Posts	President Chamber Deputies 1920-23	Governor Bank of Italy	President Chamber Deputies 1948-53	Prime and foreign minister	Foreign minister

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major party. Saragat's record in office allays fears that he would try to wield undue power.

Among other possibilities, Sandro Pertini, a 75-year-old Socialist, is president of the Chamber of Deputies, a post that Presidents De Nicola and Gronchi also held. Republican Ugo La Malfa is much mentioned but seems too conservative and business oriented to win. Other Christian Democrats, such as the centrist Paolo Taviani, Mariano Rumor, who leads the International Organization of Christian Democrats, or Giulio Andreotti, the leader of the Christian Democrats in the Chamber of Deputies, have their hopes too.

Special Interests

There is a suspicion among Italians that particular interest groups, some foreign, have an influence in the choice of the Italian president. For example, some candidates have shown concern for Washington's views. On the other hand, a reputation for being the candidate having the closest rapport with US political leaders has never provided Italian presidential candidates with the margin of victory. In 1948, for example, Foreign Minister Carlo Sforza was the loser although he was described as the pro-US candidate and was the official candidate of the Christian Democrats. In 1955, Giovanni Gronchi, the winner, was seen to be one of the candidates having the worst relations with Washington.

There is also little evidence to support the view, frequently held in Italy, that the Vatican has an effective veto over the choice of president. The first two presidents, although Catholic, were linked to anticlerical Liberal parties and the third was Communist-supported and therefore an improbable Vatican choice. While the victor in 1962, Antonio Segni, was strongly religious, the current president, Giuseppe Saragat, renounced church-going at an early age. The Vatican, nonetheless, is sometimes able to sway individuals. In 1964, Christian Democrat Fanfani maintained his candidacy against the official Christian Democratic candidate until the Vatican newspaper called publicly for his withdrawal in an effort to eliminate the split of Christian Democratic votes. Fanfani then withdrew quickly, although he had previously refused requests from fellow party leaders to do so.

Presidential aspirants have naturally sought support among functional sectors of the Italian populace just as they have among the political parties. Their campaigning with management, labor, and farmers' organizations, however, has been largely out of the public view, and it is difficult to ascertain what direct influence these groups may have had on the members of the Electoral College. The business interests of the country have tended to avoid open engagement in the presidential contests. Just the same, their support may have been decisive in the victory in 1962 of Luigi Einaudi, who was then governor of the Bank of Italy, the most influential economic post in the country. In 1955, on the other hand, the big economic interests failed when they supported Cesare Merzagora, a former director general of the Pirelli rubber complex and a defender of the interests of north Italian industry.

The Italian Communist Party is another matter. Presidential candidates of the party or its friends have never received serious consideration, but the party has supported the winning candidate in three of the five contests. Its vote was probably not decisive in the first presidential election which was almost unanimous. But in 1955 Gronchi's basic support came from the left half of the political spectrum with the Communist role essential. Relatively conservative elements jumped on the band wagon at the last moment. In 1964 the Communists played an even more dramatic part. For 12 ballots the party voted for a favorite son and for eight ballots for the hopeless candidacy of a veteran Socialist. Behind the scenes, leaders of the Communist Party's right and left wings argued the relative merits of Christian Democrat Fanfani and Social Democrat Saragat. The leader of the party's right wing, Giorgio Amendola, finally triumphed, giving victory to Saragat on the 21st ballot. Almost all presidential

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candidates today openly court Communist Party backing.

Presidential Powers

Whether the president ought to be a figurehead, subservient to the cabinet, or a person exercising substantive executive powers has been a subject of controversy since the establishment of the Republic. The five men who have occupied the presidential office over the past 25 years have themselves had different concepts of the office, with some tending toward the exercise of considerable power and others disdaining an activist role.

The intention of the constitution makers seems to have been to make the president a balance wheel, a role in which he would not determine policy or intervene in day-to-day governmental activities. Instead, he would represent the country in a formal sense, put the final seal of approval on legislation, and maintain the proper balance between the branches of government. For this last purpose, the constitution gave more powers to the president in the executive, legislative, and judicial fields than is normal in West European parliamentary governments.

In a ministerial crisis, the president selects the man who will form the next government, although his choice must later be approved by Parliament. This power is considerably greater than that of the British monarch, because Italian party structure produces a number of possible prime ministers - designate while British parties normally have only one. The chief of state's command of the armed forces is a normal attribute under the parliamentary system. In Italy he is also president of the Supreme Defense Council. This is a policy-making body that includes the prime minister, the chief of staff, and the ministers of foreign affairs, defense, industry, commerce, and treasury.

The president promulgates the laws as in other parliamentary systems, but the Italian president may refuse to do so and ask Parliament to reconsider. He must then promulgate the law in question only if the chambers reapprove it. As in other systems he can call Parliament into special session, dissolve it, and call for new elections, or refuse to dissolve it when requested. The implicit threat of such actions has in the past contributed greatly to the personal power of the post.

In addition, the president has the potential for extensive power in the scandal-ridden area of the administration of justice. He is president of the Supreme Court of Justice and under certain circumstances has the right of amnesty and pardon.

The specific constitutional grant of powers to the president is substantial and no incumbent thus far has used this grant in its totality. The first and second presidents in retrospect seem to have been self-denying. The third and fourth presidents were the most expansive, while incumbent President Saragat has followed a moderate line. Several who have held the office have demonstrated that certain power-building techniques not growing directly out of constitutional powers are available to the president.

The first president, Enrico De Nicola, was intent on emphasizing the symbolic nature of the presidency. He felt that he had an obligation to see justice done but that he must avoid open polemics. Consequently, he threatened to resign "for reasons of health" several times during his short tenure when his views were being disregarded. Since his resignation was considered undesirable, he succeeded in increasing the weight given to his political opinions.

The second president, Luigi Einaudi, was less self-effacing than De Nicola. He was not only inclined to greater pomp and ceremony but used his constitutional powers more fully as well. On three occasions in 1949-50 he refused to promulgate legislation and sent it back to Parliament for review. Einaudi's broader interpretation was made easier when the dominant political figure of the

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postwar period, Alcide De Gaspari, left the scene in 1953. In appointing the successor to De Gaspari, Einaudi omitted the customary consultations with political party chiefs and announced his choice to the press, stating, "The Constitution does not speak of consultations and trusts the judgment of the Chief of State."

It remained for Giovanni Gronchi to awaken Italian politicians to the considerable power potential of the presidential office. At the outset of his term, Gronchi announced a new concept of the presidency—one that would lend greater emphasis to the prerogatives of the post. His inaugural address, unlike the short, ritualistic speech delivered by Einaudi, was a dramatic pronouncement of views on future government policy, both domestic and foreign. It had wide impact and was interpreted as an indication that Gronchi intended to participate in the administrative and political machinery of Italy to the fullest extent allowed him under the Constitution.

He did not, in fact, go that far, although he assumed a principal role as spokesman in foreign affairs. He also took a more active role than his predecessor in the legislative process. Whereas an intermediary had presented bills to Einaudi for promulgation, Gronchi insisted that they be brought to him personally by the responsible ministers for discussion, and he set aside several days each week for the purpose.

Gronchi's development of presidential powers reached its peak during a prolonged ministerial crisis in early 1960. His decisions in connection with the crisis were given much of the blame for serious public rioting at the time. Some critics accused the president of favoring a pro-fascist orientation for the government, while others accused him of moving the country to the left under cover of a rightist-oriented cabinet. In any case, at a critical moment for Italian democracy all observers agreed for the first time that the occupant of the Quirinale was one of the country's key political figures. But in the aftermath of the crisis, it became clear that his activism had spoiled his chances for re-election.

The fourth president, Antonio Segni, had the most expansive view of presidential power. He intervened in every branch of the administration, always with a pessimistic view of the stability of the Republic and an apparent sense of his own indispensability. [redacted] 25X6 25X6 The report of a parliamentary commission of inquiry, published this year, has denied that Segni was preparing a coup d'etat in June-July 1964, but concern was widespread at that time because he consulted daily with the chief of the carabinieri, the strong man of the period. Full development of the fourth president's concept of his office was cut short when Segni suffered a stroke on 8 August 1964. He resigned in December, making way for President Saragat.

In the aftermath of concern over Segni's possible plotting, political leaders questioned the propriety of presidential consultations with the military. Most concluded that the president has a right to keep himself informed but that he should do so in a balanced and temperate way. There was general agreement that the president's rights as an Italian citizen included his right to express himself and that he is therefore free to comment politically.

The fifth president, incumbent Giuseppe Saragat, has made extensive use of his freedom to comment. Few days of his seven-year term have passed without some public expression from the Quirinale. In general, Saragat's political activity has been influential and moderating, particularly during ministerial crises. He has been subject to considerably less criticism than either Segni or Gronchi. This is partly because of his realism, which led him to comment earlier this year that the power to dissolve Parliament was one that might be employed for modest political advantage in other countries but which he could use only in extreme circumstances.

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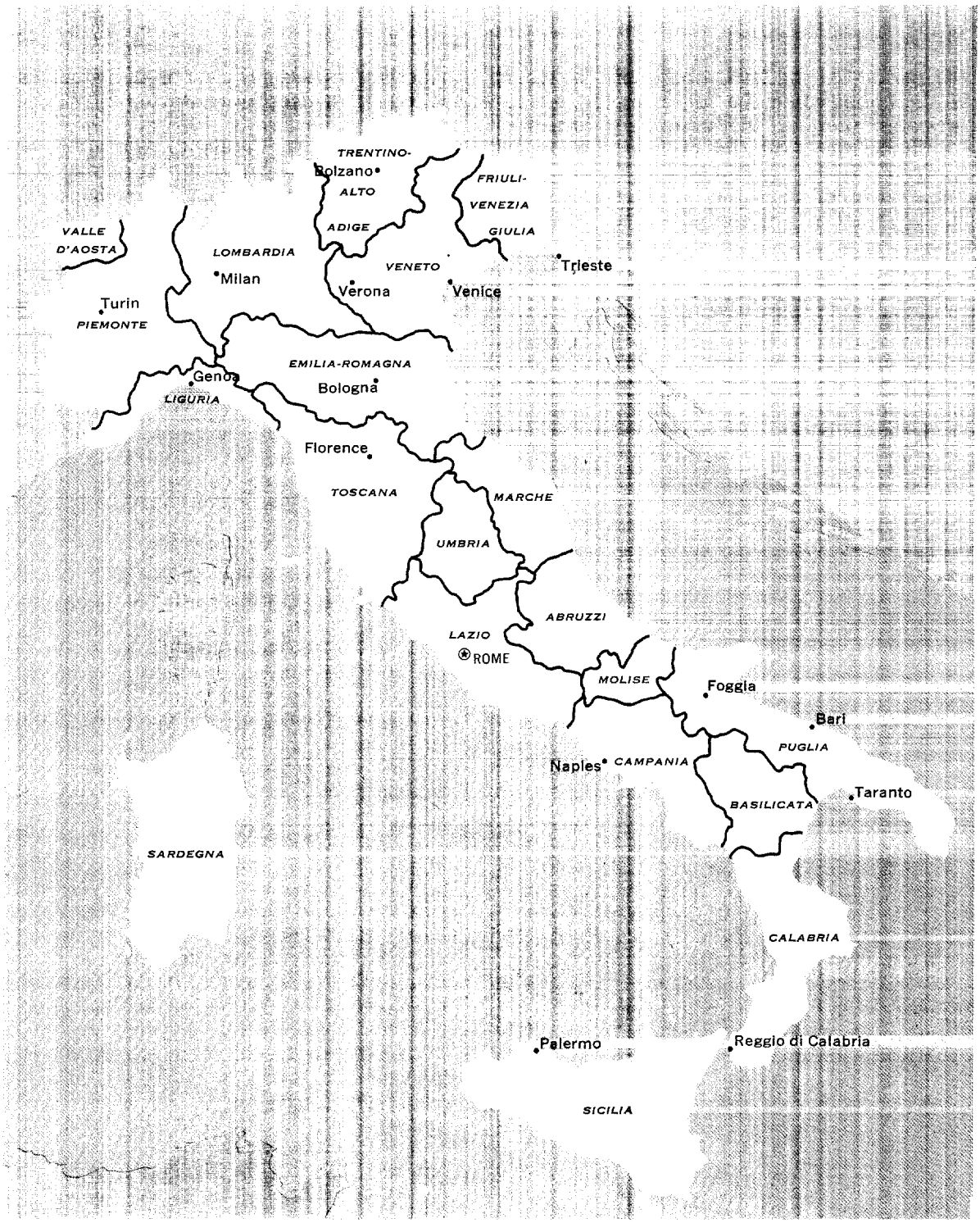

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The Backdrop of Current Issues

Whatever his predisposition toward a minimum or maximum exercise of his prerogatives, the new president will take office at a time when three issues in particular are roiling the constantly changing surface of Italian public affairs. The economy is in a decline, the neo-fascists have been getting stronger, and a referendum is scheduled next year on the divorce law recently passed by Parliament.

The country's annual rate of real economic growth averaged 5.6 percent annually in the years following immediate postwar reconstruction, i.e., 1952-1970. Even southern Italy, long an area of notorious poverty, saw its per capita income rise from $200 to $1,000. Economic growth has been a strong stabilizing factor in the political area. This year's precipitous decline in the growth rate was caused by the low level of over-all demand combined with strike-induced production disruption. It has startled and frightened Italian leaders. Every month that the slowdown continues will pose increasingly strong pressures on the government.

Italy's neo-fascists are a small party but they are disturbing to Italian leaders because of the memories they evoke of the Mussolini era. The party made gains on a law-and-order platform in off-year local elections in southern Italy last June. Uncertainty as to the cause of the stronger showing increases uneasiness among the center-left leaders. The gains are variously attributed to the drive and skill of a new neo-fascist chief, Giorgio Almirante, a craving for law and order, dissatisfaction with the Christian Democratic record in the particular areas involved, and nostalgia for the world of 30 years ago.

The referendum scheduled for the first half of next year on divorce is a matter of concern to the leaders of all the political parties, even to the Christian Democrats, who alone with the neo-fascists opposed the legislation. All other parties favored it. The Christian Democrats did not want to take a public stance in opposition to the Vatican's condemnation of the proposed law as immoral. For this reason, the Christian Democrats did not participate in debates over the bill. Modifications that would have made the bill more acceptable to them, including certain protection for the children of the divorced, were not included in the law. The Christian Democrats do not want a referendum because they do not want to campaign side by side with the neo-fascists in opposition to their colleagues of the center-left. This would be especially true if parliamentary elections were impending.

The other parties do not want the referendum because they fear the work of passing a divorce law that has already consumed an inordinate amount of legislative time might have to be started again. On top of the other problems connected with the referendum is the fact that the Communists want to establish a precedent of working with the Christian Democrats in backstage give-and-take on major legislation. They would like to discuss various modifications in the law with the idea of negotiating a compromise that the two parties could pass in Parliament without regard for other parties of the left or right. Some say the Communists would support for the presidency the Christian Democrat who would agree to such discussions. The Socialists as well as the Social Democrats and Republicans are particularly concerned at this possibility.

The new president is likely to be under considerable pressure to call early parliamentary elections in order to postpone the referendum on divorce. The elections do not have to be held by law until 1973. All operations connected with a referendum are suspended automatically when the chief of state calls elections for Parliament. A referendum cannot be held until one year after the proclamation of the new legislature. Such a postponement may seem very attractive to the government.

At the same time, the new president would have to weigh the possible effect of early

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elections on the strength of the neo-fascists as well as the electoral impact of the economic slowdown. The elections last spring were not in areas representative of the whole nation, but the Christian Democrats, who lost almost one percent on the mainland and close to eight percent in Sicily, are concerned that a nationwide trend may be running against them. As the chief party in power, they could expect to suffer additional losses because of the worsening of the economic situation. In any case, the neo-fascist gains last spring, which were mostly at the expense of the Liberals and Monarchists, would almost certainly find an echo in national parliamentary elections.

The new president will not lack problems, nor popular anxieties that could push him toward assuming greater responsibility. If he is inclined to use his constitutional powers, he can turn out to be one of Italy's most prominent and influential figures. [redacted] 25X1

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