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ITALY

SOME SIDELIGHTS ON THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION.

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Part I

According to persons well-informed on matters within Right-wing Christian Democratic circles, Amintore FANFANI did not raise any objections to Giovanni GRONCHI's candidacy until the last moment. FANFANI's candidate was Cesare MERZAGORA, whom he apparently felt he could influence should he be elected President.

When MERZAGORA withdrew his candidacy on April 29th, he asked that Luigi EINAUDI should be backed for re-election, but the Christian Democrats would not even take this suggestion into consideration. Mario SCALBA was the only person who tried to back the former President, but he was taking an isolated stand.

FANFANI even tried to persuade GRONCHI to retire in his favor, which he flatly refused to do, saying that he might do so for a non-party candidate, but never for another Christian Democrat. FANFANI came up against strong opposition from Giuseppe PELLA, Giulio ANDREOTTI, and Guido GONELLA, who were backing GRONCHI, but eventually he had to give in.

The Right-wing Christian Democrats, and all the right-wing parties such as Monarchists and the M.S.I. (Italian Social Movement,) neo-Fascist, backed GRONCHI, mainly because they wished to oppose SCALBA and FANFANI. Moreover, it appears that many of them, primarily PELLA and ANDREOTTI, came to the conclusions

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that GRONCHI could be pushed toward the "opening to the Left", basing their assumption on his open quarrel with the "Democratic Initiative." To avoid GRONCHI's possible election appearing the result of extreme Left backing, it was deemed essential therefore to persuade the Monarchists and the M.S.I. to vote for GRONCHI, which PELLA succeeded in doing. According to our sources of information, GRONCHI received 250 Christian Democratic votes of the approximately 350 non-Left votes at the election. The other hundred were cast by Monarchists and the M.S.I. members and the extreme Left cast about 308 votes. Most of the blank ballots must have been cast by Christian Democrats of FANFANI's "Democratic Initiative." The total number of ballots cast was 658.

SCELBA's position is now considered untenable. At the last meeting which the Christian Democrats held prior to the final ballot, SCELBA and his close collaborator, the Under-Secretary BENVENUTI, opposed GRONCHI's candidacy on the grounds of "international repercussions," especially American reactions, should he be elected President. Moreover, SCELBA officially asked GRONCHI what was his stand on the Western European Union and the Atlantic Pact. GRONCHI was furious and refused to answer. All of which explains his references to "KERENSKY" at later press interviews.

It is understandable, therefore, that the effect of this intervention on the part of SCELBA may prove his downfall. It appears that GRONCHI has given people to understand that he will not tolerate SCELBA as even a minister in any future government.

The present government is expected to fall soon after the inauguration of the new President. In Christian Democratic circles, the names most quoted as SCELBA's possible successor are those of, primarily, VANONI, then PELLA or ANDREOTTI.

Should GRONCHI be persuaded to block up the much-discussed "opening to the Left," it is thought that a future Cabinet might be headed by VANONI, with PELLA as Minister of Finance and ANDREOTTI as Minister of the Interior.

The position of FANFANI has weakened considerably and he has brought on his head the criticism of having created scission in the party. His stubborn opposition to GRONCHI's candidature has created a certain degree of tension between him and GRONCHI, but it is not thought that any major crisis will arise within the Party for the time being at least.

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Great importance is attached to the speech made by the Pope last Sunday (May 1st), and it is thought that the attitude which the Vatican is taking against the "opening to the Left" may influence GRONCHI, who is primarily an ambitious man.

The C.I.S.L. Trade Union opposes any collaboration with NENNI or Palmiro TOGLIATTI. This may have repercussions in the situation within the "Democratic Initiative." GRONCHI may play a bad joke on his left-wing backers and block up the "opening to the Left" for personal rather than political reasons.

For GRONCHI is a definite partisan of the "opening to the Left." On April 30th, the day after the Presidential elections, Pietro NENNI expressed his hopes in GRONCHI in an article which appeared in the left-wing daily "Avanti." This article, which flattered GRONCHI from beginning to end, expressed the hope that at least the "opening to the Left" put forward at the recent Italian Socialist Party Congress in TURIN would be realized because its champion, GRONCHI, had been elected President.

The Communist attitude is somewhat more reserved, for it must be remembered that, officially, the "opening to the Left" was only extended to the Italian Socialist Party. This is not the first time in the last few months that the Communists and the NENNI Socialists have pretended to be divided in opinion.

It is quite impossible to say, however, how far GRONCHI committed himself to the extreme Left. He has close friends among NENNI Socialists and among the Communists, such as REALE, but not all the Communist Party leaders trust him. Moreover, it must be remembered last year he was sharply attacked by the Communist daily "L'Unità" as a "double-crossing politician."

Another matter which must be taken into consideration is that neutral tendencies in foreign policy among the right-wing Christian Democrats have influenced them toward the "opening to the Left." Among these sympathizers is GONELLA, who was one of GRONCHI's supporters. In addition, many members of the extreme Right parties tend this same neutral foreign policy.

Until a government crisis arises and brings about SCELEBA's resignation, GRONCHI's intentions and the situation as a whole will remain rather obscure.

The situation may rest to some extent on the final issue of the obvious split between the Christian Democrats, on one side, and the Italian Social Democratic Party and the Liberals, on the other. By backing EINAUDI to the very end in the elections, both parties clearly expressed their disapproval of the stand which the Christian Democrats were taking.

This is another instance of the way FANFANI's tactics provoked a decided reaction.

Once again there arises the problem of clarifying the situation within the present governmental majority itself. Meetings will, therefore, have to take place between the Christian Democrats, the Liberals and the Social Democrats in the near future.

Both the smaller parties are supposed to be against the "opening to the Left." Giuseppe SARAGAT's position in the Italian Social Democrat Party is crumbling, and his recent statements at Montecitorio (the House of Parliament) when he called GRONCHI's elections a "coup d'etat," have been severely criticized. All this has strengthened the hand of Matteo MATTEOTTI, who is strongly opposed to any collaboration with the extreme Left, and whose attitude is supported by party members who belong to the U.I.L. Trade Union.

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