

'The advent of the Republic in Italy' from Le Monde (7 June 1946)

Caption: On 7 June 1946, the French daily newspaper Le Monde presents the official results of the national referendum held in Italy on 2 June 1946, which led to the establishment of a Republic in the country.

Source: Le Monde. dir. de publ. Beuve-Méry, Hubert. 07.06.1946, n° 453; 3e année. Paris: Le Monde. "L'avènement de la République en Italie", p. 1.

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The advent of the Republic in Italy

According to the most recent official numbers, the Republic has claimed victory in Italy by a majority of approximately 1 800 000 out of a total of 24 million votes cast. It is certain that the votes yet to be counted will not significantly affect this outcome.

However, it is surprising that two million ballot papers were spoiled. This can be explained, for the most part undoubtedly, by the lack of knowledge and the inexperience of voters, of whom many — including all women — were, for the first time, exercising their right to vote.

It should be added that the votes were counted with particular rigour; the smallest of marks on a ballot paper, such as a tiny trace of lipstick — according to correspondents — was enough to spoil it.

Were there frauds? This is what some in monarchist circles are claiming. It has even been announced that Marquis Lucifero, Minister of the Royal House, will lodge a complaint with Admiral Ellevy Stone.

For his part, the head of the government, Mr De Gasperi, gave his assurance that the voting was carried out in a perfectly proper manner, and if needed, he could provide proof that scrutineers from different parties were present at the polling stations.

What is true is that the Republic won only by a narrow margin, and — what is more serious — the division of votes corresponds to the country's two halves: by a large majority, the north supports the republican system, whereas all the central and southern provinces, except Umbria, voted for the monarchy. There are some who see in this a serious threat to national unity, especially since particularist, if not separatist, tendencies are emerging, as we know, in Sicily and Sardinia. This is why these regions have already been opted for a degree of autonomy, and this is also why men like Randolfo Pacciardi, Secretary of the Republican Party, advocate a Federalist system, modelled on the Swiss system.

Moreover, one could go on at length about the 2 June vote and about its potential consequences.

The abdication of Victor Emmanuel III, only a few weeks before the vote, evidently boosted the monarchist cause, as the still considerable number of its supporters attests. But it was not enough to erase the painful memories of the Mussolini era, from the consequences of which the country is still suffering; nor was it enough to free the crown from the blame that it will share, in the eyes of History, with Il Duce.

It must also be said that the sovereign has not exercised real power for more than 20 years and that, furthermore, after the liberation, Italy has operated, with a purely nominal regency, under a de facto Republican regime. Apart from the fact that the Republican tradition goes back a long way for our transalpine neighbours and that it has never been completely abandoned, this latter consideration seems likely to reassure those who may fear that the fall of the monarchy might constitute a destabilising factor.

One thing is certain: Italy will never have a greater need for internal harmony if it wants to work undisturbed towards restoration and taking its place once more in the international area.

We know that the current government will stay in power until 24 June, the date on which it will submit its resignation to the National Assembly.

How will the new Cabinet be constituted? This remains to be seen after the election results are in, but it should include those parties that received the most votes, namely, aside from the parties of the previous 'coalition' (Christian Democrats, Socialists, Communists, Democratic Union), the party known as the Republican Party (which, with just over a million votes, is in fifth place) and perhaps also the 'Uomo qualunque', despite the extremist tendencies that it has displayed in the past.

The task of combining such diverse forces undoubtedly seems fairly difficult. It will mostly be the responsibility of the Christian Democrats, who amassed more than 35 % of the votes and who will hold

197 of the Assembly's 556 seats. The fact that they already form a solid base for the new government, coupled with the strong personality of their leader, allows us to hope that Italy will pass without incident through this delicate phase of its political life.