

**“Corriere della Sera”, October 28, 1958.**

Yesterday also black smoke from the Sistine Chapel.

The cardinals have not yet elected the Pope,  
but there could not have been eight ballots cast so far.

Tenacious minorities are opposed to the most favored candidates.

**Rome, October 27, night.**

The chimney of the Sistine Chapel said “no” again today at both scheduled events, and this time without ambiguity. This confirms what we had the opportunity to say on the eve of the conclave, namely that tenacious minorities have formed. Without defining them as die-hard opponents, they are clearly opposing some of the most favored candidates; consequently the extremely quick election everybody was talking about is not at all likely to take place. Pius XII’s successor will therefore be elected by a true “Conclave”, similar to the one which elected Benedict XV, which lasted three days, that which elected Pius XI, which lasted four, and the one which elected Pius X, which lasted five.

### **A Lengthy Election Process**

Now, instead of a speedy Conclave, they are talking about just the opposite, a long and contentious election. Of course, seventeen votes are enough, exactly one third, to block an election. It is certain that there are many and varied motives and alliances, enough to amass seventeen votes. Unfortunately today there are many non-Italian cardinals, even non-European ones, and the majority of them not very well known. In order to try to distinguish one from the other, you would need to be either Monsignor Montini or Monsignor Tardini, one of the high representatives of the Secretary of State of Pius XII, who, because of their office, had the opportunity to become deeply acquainted with all the current Princes of the Church.

This reporter is certainly not in a position to venture into such an analysis, as more than half of the names do not mean anything to him. He can only assume, based on what happened in previous Conclaves, that during the eight ballots cast so far the most well known names – supported also by the public – were present. For all of them there have been challenges, however, which could very well be overcome in the coming days. And it is still too early to conclude that the Conclave is already in search of new names, on which the two thirds majority can agree. It is even more premature to talk, as some have already started doing, about the certainty of a long Conclave, of a dead-lock, of the necessity to resort to emergency solutions, such as an attempt to get the two-thirds majority to agree on a candidate outside of the Conclave.

But have there really been eight ballots cast in these first two days, or instead is it not more likely that there were only four? This was a highly debated point today among the news reporters covering the papal election, and their opinions were all but in agreement. The majority shares the point of view that there were eight ballots, and that this is the number there should have been, based upon the Constitution ruling the Conclave. This Constitution, after having explained the reasons for suggesting the abolition of the so called election “by access” (because it was too complicated) states:

“We confirm the dispositions of our predecessor Pius X, who strongly wished to remedy this inconvenience, and, on the other hand, in no way to hinder the speed of the necessary election, and order that, in the place of this “access” the cardinals will, whether in the morning or the evening, but only once more, immediately proceed with another ballot, after having completed the first ballot according to the rules so far set forth, in the case that no election took place. In that balloting, they will cast their votes once again, without considering the votes cast previously. We wish furthermore that in this second ballot the same formal procedures be respected as in the first, so that the cardinals are not obliged to take the oath again or to select new vote-counters, nurses, and clerks, who will remain the same for the second ballot, with no need of change.”

Despite the fact that there should clearly be two ballots each session, this morning the smoke [or the “smoke signals” as the purists would define it] was released shortly before 11:00 am. The time for voting must have therefore been about one and a half hours, as the bell was heard around 9:00 am, and after the bell there was a low Mass for all the cardinals, which took a half an hour. Is it possible that in one and a half hours two ballots could have been cast, and, what’s more, the stove lit? From an approximate assessment of the time that all these operations should take, it would appear that that would not have been possible.

Let’s assume that everything was ready and the ballot papers already distributed when the Cardinals were left alone in the Chapel, and that after ten minutes all the preparations were completed and the ballot papers filled out. About fifty people, many burdened with age, must immediately thereafter proceed one by one to the altar, linger there in prayer, move in front of the chalice, take the ritual oath, place the ballot paper on the paten, cast it into the chalice, and then return to their places.

It does not seem an exaggeration to assume that it takes each one at least two minutes to do all this, and with just all this the voting process would have taken one and a half hours. In addition, there still remain the unfolding of the ballots, the counting – which is time consuming – the announcing of the result, and the burning of the ballots.

This morning, it is said, there was really only one ballot, but that this happened for another reason: the cardinals had to forego a second balloting because one of them took ill. This rumor was later dismissed; in this case the secrecy surrounding the Conclave allows for some concessions, if for no other reason than to calm the relatives. In any case, there are too many venerable old men among the papal electors, and they are often in poor shape, thus, similar rumors spread easily.

## **Two sick cardinals**

Another rumor this morning, which also concerned Cardinal Canali, proved a source of extreme anguish for his sister. The rumor, however originated in a misunderstanding.

The doctor who was inside, Doctor De Lollis, was said to have asked the Fatebenefratelli hospital to send over some medical records. From this people had surmised that the records pertained to some of the cardinals, notably the Roman ones. The records instead were those of some patients who had recently undergone surgery and of whose condition the doctor wanted to be kept informed. It looks certain, however, that at least two cardinals did have to rely on servants to deliver their ballots, since the archbishop of Malinea, Van Roy is also bedridden.

Judging from the cases of bottles being delivered through the turnstile of the Borgia courtyard, the cardinals are consuming a lot of mineral water. While the crowd was waiting for the smoke signal tonight in Saint Peter's square, a large amount of meat, eggs, vegetables and fruit was delivered through that same opening.

## **The case of 1939**

Through the small turnstile placed at the entrance of the courtyard of San Damaso, a lot of mail has passed: a large package containing books and documents, addressed to the Conclave secretary, which had been carefully inspected before being allowed through; a purplish mozzetta for the Archbishop of Quito, Carlo Maria de la Torre; two woolen robes for Cardinal Micara. A few minutes before the morning closure, the Chinese minister to the Holy See showed up with the same things he had yesterday, and sent in the roasted chicken and tureen of broth that have by now become a ritual.

Rumor has it that, because of an infraction at one of the turnstiles, a Swiss guard has been expelled today from the Corps. The soldier had let a woman who brought a little bundle of garments, destined for her mechanic son who is located inside among the personnel, pass without authorization. But the guard was, in reality, expelled by the very stern new commander for acts of insubordination, and the turnstile of the Conclave didn't enter into the matter.

Prince Sigismondo Chigi is always present at the opening and closing of the turnstiles, but does not always wear the formal costume he wore Saturday night, when he was sworn in at the Sistine Chapel. Yesterday he was in the Loggia della Dame, in the Vatican Palace, with the Conclave commissary, the consistorial counsel Corsanego, when the fumata believed to be good appeared. Because the two of them would have to present themselves shortly at the Conclave door for the opening ceremonies, they rushed to get dressed in their proper attire and learned of the false alarm only when they came back out wearing their formal attire.

Today Vatican Radio assured us that similar incidents will not be repeated. “We will tell you the Pope has been elected only after getting an irrefutable confirmation” said Padre Pellegrino, who yesterday was betrayed by an enthusiasm that is a credit to his cassock and, carried away by passion, was reasoning as if the Sistine Chapel's stove could be capable of understanding and will, as if it could realize what was happening on the roof, and could comprehend the anxieties and doubts that it had generated; moreover, that it could remedy these with “irrefutable” manifestations.

Padre Pellegrino should take comfort in the fact that the same thing as yesterday also happened in 1939: the smoke which should have been black appeared, instead, completely white to begin with, white but exceptionally dense, almost chalky later, and, finally, streaked with black striations.

In the evening, then, at the positive smoke that came after the first ballot and, therefore, ahead of time — something which can also occur this time in either the morning or the afternoon — the smoke was white like that in the morning, but less dense, and not lacking the final black striations, so opinions immediately became heatedly divided. The radio, however, very calmly declared that the smoke was white, and invited the people to go to the piazza to receive the new pope's blessing. And this happened only because the conclave secretary, who was at the time Monsignor Santoro, not trusting in the stove at all, had Prince Chigi summoned to one of the turnstiles, and handed a letter in which he was told to alert the radio that, in any case, the smoke should be white and positive.

Silvio Negro