

---

# CHRONOLOGY OF ITALIAN POLITICAL EVENTS, 2005

## January

- 1 Broad consensus among the political forces in favor of the year-end message of the president of the Republic, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi. Criticism from the Lega Nord (LN) and Rifondazione Comunista (RC).
- 3 Data on public expenditure are published: at the end of 2004, the borrowing requirement showed a fall of 1.2 billion euros compared to 2003. For the Ministry of the Economy and Finance, the improvement is a result of the economic recovery and “a series of measures agreed on by Italy and the European Union.”
- 4 Ciampi visits the Neapolitan quarter of Scampia, where numerous homicides attributable to the *camorra* have recently occurred.

After some days of tension within the center-left, Romano Prodi says that he follows “with detachment” what occurs in Rome.
- 5 The government intervenes against the five referendum questions on artificial insemination in the review proceedings before the Constitutional Court.
- 6 Protests from secularist members of the center-right against the government’s decision to line up against the referenda on artificial insemination.
- 7 Prodi asks those politicians who intend to challenge him for the leadership of the center-left to “come out into the open.” He demands that the primaries be held by the end of May and that there be single lists of the center-left for the next regional elections.
- 10 The law against smoking comes into force.

Umberto Bossi, the leader of the LN, threatens to run Roberto Maroni against the outgoing president, Roberto Formigoni, in the regional election in Lombardy.

- 11 Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi rejects the idea of “governors’ lists” for the regional elections.

At the inauguration of the judicial year, the prosecutor general, Francesco Favara, announces that in Italy 81 percent of crimes remained unpunished.

- 12 The Casa delle Libertà (CdL) decides that only the “governors” (presidents) of Lazio and Liguria, Francesco Storace and Sandro Biasotti, respectively, may present personal lists at the coming regional elections. Criticism from President Formigoni of Lombardy.
- 13 The Constitutional Court admits four referenda on artificial insemination, while rejecting the question that requested total abrogation of the law.
- 14 Berlusconi announces that Forza Italia (FI) will allow its electorate freedom of conscience in the referendum on artificial insemination. Prodi hopes that an agreement will be reached in Parliament prior to the referendum.

Berlusconi meets the governor of the Bank of Italy, Antonio Fazio, to talk about the reform of the law on savings. They agree on the life term of the governor and on the defense of the Italian character of the banks.

- 15 At the inauguration of the new judicial year, a clash occurs in Palermo between Prosecutor Piero Grasso and Minister of Justice Roberto Castelli on the reform of the judiciary.
- 16 Nichi Vendola, the representative of RC, defeats Francesco Boccia, the candidate of the moderate forces of the center-left, in the primary elections in Puglia to choose a candidate for president of the region.
- 17 Cardinal Camillo Ruini, president of the Italian Bishops’ Conference (CEI), invites Catholics to abstain from voting in the referendum on artificial insemination.
- 18 The center-left decides to hold leadership primary elections by the end of May.
- 19 Yet again, Parliament fails to fill two vacancies on the Constitutional Court. Berlusconi rejects the candidacy of Luciano Violante of the DS (Democratici di Sinistra or Left Democrats).
- 20 The government is defeated twice in a parliamentary committee on the reform of the savings law: the committee approves both a term limit for the governor of the Bank of Italy and the transfer of supervision of bank competition to the Anti-trust Authority.

- 21 An Italian soldier is killed in Nassiriya. Berlusconi and the minister of foreign affairs, Gianfranco Fini, rule out the possibility of withdrawing the Italian contingent from Iraq.
- 24 The center-left wins Senate by-elections in the constituencies of Bari and Rovigo.
- 25 The Chamber of Deputies approves the European Constitution. The bill goes to the Senate.
- 27 Negotiations within the center-right to choose a candidate for president of the Campania region fail.
- 28 The sentences of 18 years in jail for the three found guilty of setting the Primavalle fire in 1973, in which two sons of a neo-fascist perished, are cancelled by the statute of limitations.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) sounds the alarm over Italy's public finances: in 2005 the deficit will be 3.1–3.2 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP), rather than 2.7 percent as forecast by the Italian government.
- 29 Alleanza Nazionale (AN) attacks Castelli for not intervening to avoid the cancellation of the sentences for the Primavalle massacre.
- 31 The center-left remains split on the significance of the Iraqi elections.

## February

- 1 The center-left reaches a common position on Iraq, favoring the withdrawal of Italian troops within the framework of greater involvement by the United Nations.
- 2 Fiat and General Motors (GM) fail to reach an agreement in negotiations on Fiat's option to sell Fiat Auto to GM.
- 3 The congress of the Left Democrats (DS) begins in Rome.
- 4 In Baghdad, the journalist of *Il Manifesto*, Giuliana Sgrena, is kidnapped.

During the DS congress, Romano Prodi is acclaimed as leader of the Ulivo (Olive Tree coalition). Massimo D'Alema relaunches the idea of a single center-left party.
- 5 Meeting at Palazzo Chigi on the abduction of Giuliana Sgrena. Fini appeals for her liberation on the Arabic television station Al Jazeera.
- 6 The government decides to include the opposition in the initiatives for the liberation of Sgrena.
- 8 The minister of the economy and finance, Domenico Siniscalco, announces that the privatization of Radio Televisione Italiana (RAI) will take place this year. The minister of communications,

Maurizio Gasparri, declares that the new board of directors will be nominated by the end of June.

The European Commission asks Fazio for clarification on the degree of openness of the Italian banking system to European banks.

- 9 The Union of Christian Democrats and Center Democrats (UDC) rejects once and for all the possibility of an alliance between the center-right and the Radicals for the coming regional elections.
- 10 The center-left decides to vote against refinancing the Italian mission in Iraq.
  - Strike in the air transport sector.
- 11 Strike in the railway sector.
- 12 In response to European Union (EU) criticism, Fazio defends the Italian banking system, saying that "it is the most open system in Europe."
- 13 Fiat and GM sign an agreement according to which GM will pay Fiat 1.55 billion euros to dissolve the alliance established in 2000 and cancel Fiat's right to sell 90 percent of its automobile sector to GM.
- 14 The president of the Superior Council of the Judiciary (CSM), Virginio Rognoni, supports the prosecutor of Verona, Guido Papalia, against the harsh criticism directed at him during an LN demonstration.
- 15 The Unione (the coalition of parties of the center-left) decides to vote against refinancing the Italian military in Iraq, but the reformists of the Margherita come out in favor of abstention.

According to the National Statistical Institute (ISTAT), in 2004 the Italian economy grew by only 1.1 percent. Siniscalco calls this a "negative surprise."

The CSM approves a strongly worded document in which it condemns the declarations of the minister of institutional reforms and devolution, Roberto Calderoli, during the LN demonstration in Verona criticizing the prosecutor, Papalia.

- 16 Parliament approves (with the Unione voting against) the refinancing of the Italian military mission in Iraq.
- 17 The Senate fails to reach a quorum four times in the debate on devolution. Calderoli threatens to resign and the LN threatens to leave the government.

The advocate general of the European Court of Justice declares that the IRAP (Regional Tax on Business Activities) is illegitimate.

- 19 The committee for abstention in the referendum on artificial insemination is formed.
- 20 EU finance ministers reach an agreement on the reform of the Stability and Growth Pact.

Prodi announces the position of the center-left toward the US: friendship, but “equal dignity.” Criticism from the radical wing of the center-left.

The congress of the Union of Democrats for Europe (UDEUR) ends in Naples. It approves a political line that promises loyalty to the center-left, but not unconditionally.

- 21 Siniscalco announces that the government will see that the Bank of Italy maintains control over competition in the banking sector. He furthermore states that it will not intervene to limit the governor’s term of office.
- 22 Berlusconi meets with the US president, George W. Bush, in Brussels and declares that only at the end of 2005 will Italy consider its eventual withdrawal from Iraq.
- 23 With a resolution approved by a wide majority, the CSM censures the law to amend the statute of limitations to reduce the time limits for certain crimes (the “save Previti” law), which is still being debated in Parliament.

Ciampi rebukes the CSM on the delays in appointments to senior positions in the judiciary.

- 24 The Radicals ask Prodi to enter into an agreement with them for the regional elections and the 2006 general election. The leader of the Unione rebuffs the offer.
- 25 Ciampi issues a warning about the state of the Italian economy, asserting that the economy is suffering from “weak productivity growth, the foreign trade situation is unsatisfactory, and we are losing competitiveness, even in the Eurozone.”

The minister of education, universities, and research, Letizia Moratti, announces that 200,000 contract teachers and staff will be taken on permanently within the next five years.

- 26 Berlusconi invites Ciampi not to “listen to the center-left’s deceptive arguments” on the state of the Italian economy.

In Rome, the leaders of the DS, the Margherita, the Italian Democratic Socialists (SDI), and the European Republicans found the Federation of center-left parties, the Fed.

- 27 The president’s office responds to Berlusconi’s criticisms: “It is not the habit of President Ciampi to pay attention to promptings, suggestions, or gratuitous criticism from whatever source they may come.”
- 28 Ciampi declares that he will “always be vigilant and strict in protecting the autonomy and independence of the judiciary,” and that he does not like to talk of economic decline, as he is “convinced that Italy has the capacity and strength to grow and to maintain a leading position.”

## March

- 1 According to ISTAT, in 2004 the public debt decreased, but the deficit remained at exactly 3 percent of the GDP.

As a result of the difficulties they have encountered in their meetings with the two poles, the Radicals decide not to participate in the regional elections.

- 2 The Chamber amends the law on savings to delete both the introduction of a limited term for the governor of the Bank of Italy and the transfer of supervision of banking competition from the Bank to the Anti-trust Authority.
- 3 A decision by the Communications Authority rules that the duopoly of RAI and Mediaset in the radio-television market impedes pluralism and competition.

The congress of RC begins in Venice. Fausto Bertinotti announces that it will be his last congress as party secretary.

The Chamber gives first reading to the law on savings.

- 4 Nicola Calipari, an official of the Military Intelligence and Security Service (SISMI), is killed in Iraq by American soldiers during the liberation of the Italian journalist Giuliana Sgrena. Italy protests to the United States.
- 5 Ciampi asks for a rigorous American investigation into the death of Nicola Calipari.
- 6 The RC congress ends with the approval of the political line proposed by Bertinotti.
- 8 The LN threatens to vote against the decree on competitiveness if the government does not impose duties to protect domestic production.

The Communications Authority fines RAI and Mediaset 2 percent of their advertising income for 2003 because they have exceeded the limits on shares of advertising revenue.

- 9 Berlusconi reports to the Senate on the liberation of Giuliana Sgrena and the death of Nicola Calipari, claiming credit for the firm attitude of the Italian government and recognizing the opposition's "responsible" behavior.
- 10 The LN threatens to vote against the decree on competitiveness if a high commissioner is not appointed to combat counterfeit products and if the government does not suspend relations with the European Commission for its failure to protect Italian products.
- 11 The Council of Ministers launches a package of measures to increase Italian competitiveness. The LN votes against some of the measures because the package does not contain duties against imports from Asia.

- 12 The electoral commission of the Rome Court of Appeal excludes the Social Alternative list, led by Alessandra Mussolini, from the ballot for the regional election in Lazio.

The LN announces that it is against financing the construction of the bridge over the Strait of Messina and asks that the government not exceed the funding included in the 2005 budget for the renewal of the public sector labor contract.

- 13 Calderoli proposes the reintroduction of the death penalty “for those who commit very serious crimes against minors, as well as for pedophiles.”

Alessandra Mussolini announces a hunger strike in anticipation of the Regional Administrative Court of Lazio’s decision on the exclusion of her list from the Lazio regional election.

- 14 Investigations of false signatures among the presenters of electoral lists in the regional elections spread to various regions.

The government decides to open negotiations for the renewal of the government employees’ contracts, offering to use only the resources allocated in the 2005 budget.

- 15 Berlusconi announces that in agreement with British Premier Tony Blair, the progressive withdrawal of Italian soldiers from Iraq will begin in September. The Chamber approves the refinancing of the Italian mission in Iraq.

- 16 Blair and Bush correct Berlusconi: they say that no definite date has been chosen for the Italian withdrawal from Iraq. Berlusconi declares: “It was only a hope.”

- 17 Calderoli announces his resignation after the Senate fails four times to reach the quorum in the debate on the reform of the Constitution (devolution).

- 18 Eurostat does not confirm Italy’s public accounts for 2003 and 2004 and announces that “clarification” of the data “could lead to an upward revision of the government deficit.”

- 19 At Confindustria’s assembly of small enterprises, Berlusconi announces the abolition of the IRAP in the next budget and states that Italy will demand the reform of the Stability and Growth Pact. Critical remarks from the president of Confindustria, Luca Cordero di Montezemolo.

- 20 Berlusconi applauds the agreement reached at ECOFIN (the Economic and Financial Affairs Council of the European Union) that loosens the restrictions imposed by the Stability Pact.

- 21 Prodi describes the reform of the Stability Pact as “modest”; the European Central Bank (ECB) threatens to raise interest rates.

- 22 The Council of State upholds the appeal against the exclusion of Alessandra Mussolini’s list from the regional election in Lazio.

- Berlusconi under investigation in Milan for corrupting a witness in the inquiry into Mediaset's film rights.
- 23 The reform of the second part of the Constitution passes the Senate, with only the majority voting in favor. The center-left leaves the Chamber when the vote is taken.
  - 24 The decrees on education are approved. Education is made mandatory until the age of 18, and the possibility of alternating between education and work is introduced.
  - 25 Marco Follini, secretary of the UDC, says that collaboration on institutional reforms with the center-left (as well as within the majority itself) would have led to better results.
  - 26 Montezemolo asks that entrepreneurs who occupy positions in Confindustria resign if they express themselves in favor of a particular political position.
  - 28 The Bank of Bilbao decides to launch a public exchange offer for 100 percent of the Banca Nazionale del Lavoro (BNL).
  - 29 The majority is divided over the renewal of the government employees' contracts. AN and UDC propose to increase salaries by a hundred euros a month, but Berlusconi is not supportive.
  - 30 The Dutch bank ABN AMRO announces a public exchange offer for 100 percent of the Banca Antonveneta.
  - 31 Berlusconi says he is in favor of the initiatives of foreign banks in Italy.

## April

- 1 The reinstatement of an excluded electoral list leads to the postponement by two weeks of the regional election in Basilicata.
- 2 Pope John Paul II dies in Rome. The government announces three days of national mourning.
- 3 On the first voting day in the regional elections, the minister of the interior, Giuseppe Pisanu, orders the removal of party posters with the image of the Pope.
- 4 The center-left wins the elections in 11 regions, against the 2 (Veneto and Lombardia) won by the center-right. The turnout is only 71.5 percent.

According to the EU, the Italian deficit is heading toward 3.6 percent in 2005.

- 5 Berlusconi recognizes the center-left's victory in the regional elections and denounces a "parallel state of the Left."

Following the regional election results, Prodi announces that the primaries are no longer necessary.

- 6 AN and UDC ask Berlusconi to call the election early and to lessen the LN's role in the government. Prodi offers the majority the center-left's collaboration in the renewal of the Italian economy.  
The Senate ratifies the European Constitution.
- 7 Berlusconi announces that "in the Pole we are talking about an October election."  
Rumors of the probable resignation of Follini and Fini as vice-premiers.
- 8 Berlusconi is willing to consider Fini's requests. "Let's reflect upon devolution," he says, promising "a clear signal of discontinuity in the action of the government."  
Roberto Maroni, the minister of welfare, rejects any possibility of reconsidering the constitutional reform.
- 9 Berlusconi is working on the possibility of limited changes in the composition of the government and proposes more attention to the South and family incomes.
- 10 Follini says that the results of the regional elections should be considered as "a vote against a certain way of governing" and proposes calling an early election.
- 11 The LN opposes the idea of calling an early election. Berlusconi says he is ready to go through a parliamentary vote to resolve the crisis. The leader of the Margherita, Francesco Rutelli, asks the center-right moderates to support the center-left's project.
- 12 Montezemolo pressures the government, saying that it is better to have an early election than paralysis.
- 13 The European Commissioner Joaquín Almunia announces that by the end of June, he will commence an infraction procedure against Italy for its excessive deficit.  
Parliament gives final approval to the European arrest warrant.
- 14 Berlusconi's family holding company puts 17 percent of Mediaset up for sale on the market.  
Follini asks for the opening of a "piloted" governmental crisis. Berlusconi favors only a cabinet reshuffle.
- 15 Vice-Premier Follini and the three UDC ministers resign. Berlusconi threatens an early election unless the UDC returns to the government. Ciampi asks for the opening of a formal crisis.
- 16 Follini refuses to sign Berlusconi's proposed agreement to change the government and its program under the same leader.
- 17 Berlusconi says he "does not want give in to the First Republic-style games of a party that in 2001 took only 3 percent," the UDC.
- 18 After a meeting with the president of the Republic, Berlusconi announces that he is not resigning and that he wants to bring the crisis before Parliament. Follini and Fini, with whom the premier

had agreed to form a new government under his own leadership, are caught unprepared.

The center-left wins the regional election in Basilicata.

- 19 With letters of resignation from the AN ministers in his pocket, Fini criticizes Berlusconi for not resigning.

The new Pope, Joseph Ratzinger, is elected, taking the name of Benedict XVI.

- 20 Prime Minister Berlusconi resigns.

- 21 Ciampi initiates consultations for the formation of a new government. Follini announces that he will not be part of it.

- 22 Berlusconi is commissioned to form a new government.

- 23 The crisis ends. The new government takes the oath of office before President Ciampi.

- 24 Prodi accuses Berlusconi of “wrecking the Constitution with senseless reform projects.”

- 25 During the celebrations of Liberation Day, Ciampi declares that “the Resistance lives in the Constitution ... which is the basis of the civil association of the entire nation.”

- 26 Berlusconi presents the government in the Chamber (24 ministers, 9 vice-ministers, and 63 undersecretaries) and proposes a single party of the center-right.

Tension with the UDC.

The Milan prosecutor’s office asks that Berlusconi be indicted for Mediaset’s purchases of film rights.

- 27 The Chamber votes confidence in the new Berlusconi government. The UDC’s support is “neither aloof nor with any illusions.”

Two EU commissioners write to Fazio asking for “clarification” on the delays in authorizing the Dutch group, ABN AMRO, to acquire more than 20 percent of Banca Antonveneta’s capital.

- 28 The new government obtains the Senate’s confidence as well. In his speech, Berlusconi raises once again the idea of a single center-right party and attacks the ECB, which he holds responsible for making the euro too strong vis-à-vis the dollar.

- 29 Italy and the United States confirm their failure to agree on the conclusions of the report regarding the circumstances of Calipari’s death.

The Ministry of the Economy and Finance revises its growth estimates downwards: in 2005, the Italian economy will grow by 1.2 percent instead of 2.1 percent, as forecast by the government.

- 30 Berlusconi announces that he could leave politics when a single center-right party is created.

## May

- 1 Labor unions celebrate May Day in the Neapolitan district of Scampia, where in the past few months the war between gang bosses has claimed many victims.
- 2 Italy publishes its conclusions on the death of Calipari. They are very different from those of the American commission of inquiry.
- 3 In discussions with US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Fini reaffirms that Italy's alliance with the US is not in question in spite of their divergence in opinion regarding the death of Calipari.

The European Court of Justice rejects the Milan judges' appeal against the law on falsification of company accounts.

- 4 The government obtains the confidence of the Senate on the decree on competitiveness and announces it will reintroduce severe penalties for falsification of accounts, even though the decree itself reduces them.
- 5 In Parliament, Berlusconi declares that there are "evident discrepancies" between the Italian and American versions of Calipari's death. The opposition asks for the withdrawal of Italian troops from Iraq.

The Corte dei Conti (Court of Audit) invites the government not to go further along the path of tax cuts "without specific measures to finance them, which will not be easy."

- 6 The Bank of Italy allows ABN AMRO to launch a public tender offer for 100 percent of Banca Antonveneta.

The LN's federal council rejects the idea of a single center-right party.

- 9 The center-left again makes gains in local elections in Sardinia, Trentino-Alto Adige, and Valle d'Aosta, involving about 2 million voters.
- 10 Fini announces that the withdrawal of Italian troops from Iraq will start in February 2006.

Fini also declares that he will vote "yes" on three of the four referendum questions on artificial insemination. He is criticized from within AN.

- 11 The Chamber votes confidence in the government on the "urgent measures within the framework of the plan of action for economic, social, and territorial development."

Berlusconi rejects the unions' request to increase government employees' salaries by 111 euros.

- 12 For the second consecutive semester, ISTAT reports negative growth in Italy.

- 13 Berlusconi appeals to labor unions and entrepreneurs to revive the nation's economy.
- 14 At the ECOFIN meeting in Luxembourg, France, Austria, and the Netherlands express preoccupation about the "Italian case." Siniscalco asks for collaboration from the political forces and social partners. Prodi asks Berlusconi to launch an "operation truth" about the public accounts.
- 15 The minister of agricultural policies and forestry, Giovanni Alemanno, proposes to tax interest income.
- 16 An Italian volunteer, Clementina Cantoni, is kidnapped in Afghanistan.  
 In local elections in Catania, Umberto Scapagnini, the center-right candidate, is re-elected mayor. The center-left wins in Enna.
- 17 Ciampi asks the government to make "credible decisions" in economic policy and not to "weaken the safeguards that ensure stability and provide a guarantee against financial turbulence."  
 The parliamentary Supervisory Committee appoints seven members to the RAI's new board of directors.
- 18 Berlusconi rejects the idea of taxing interest income and announces that he wants to reduce the number of government employees.  
 The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) comes out against devolution, as it makes it more difficult to control public expenditure, and asks for a pay freeze for public employees.
- 20 By a large majority, the federal assembly of the Margherita decides to present separate lists for the proportional seats at the next general election.  
 Berlusconi asks his allies to promote the formation of a single party by the end of the summer. Cool response from Fini and the UDC.  
 Vittorio Grilli is appointed director general of the Treasury. Mario Canzio becomes accountant general.
- 22 Prodi asks the center-left to work for "a coalition and a government able to make the decisions necessary to save Italy."
- 23 Cesare Previti is sentenced to seven years by the appeals court for the IMI-SIR affair and acquitted in the case of the Mondadori judgment.  
 Eurostat revises Italy's deficit/GDP ratio upwards: in 2003 and 2004, the deficit reached 3.1 percent of GDP.  
 The center-right wins the communal elections in Bolanzo in the second round, but loses control of many local authorities in Sardinia.

- 24 According to the OECD, Italy is in a recession. It forecasts that in 2005, the GDP will decrease by 0.6 percent, while the deficit/GDP ratio will reach 4.4 percent.
- 25 Prodi announces that he wishes to present a list of the Ulivo for the general election, despite the opposition of the Margherita.
- 26 At the assembly of Confindustria, Montezemolo asks the government and the political class to make decisions even if they are “unpopular” and to “get their heads out of the ballot boxes.”  
Ciampi appeals to the two poles to act decisively on the economy without waiting for the election.
- 27 The agreement for the renewal of the government employees’ contracts is signed. It provides for a salary increase of 100 euros.
- 28 The government announces that it wants to revise the mechanisms for negotiating labor contracts. The representatives of Confindustria express concern about the agreement signed with the government employees.
- 29 Disappointment over France’s rejection of the European Constitution. The LN asks for another vote on it in Italy. Bertinotti talks about it as a defeat for the Ulivo.
- 30 Benedict XVI says he is “close in words and prayers” to the Italian bishops in their call for abstention in the referendum on artificial insemination.
- 31 The parliamentary Supervisory Committee rejects the Treasury’s proposal to appoint Andrea Monorchio as president of RAI.  
At the annual assembly of the Bank of Italy, Antonio Fazio declares that Italian firms are characterized by “dwarfism” and have little propensity toward innovation.  
Four Italian soldiers die in an accident in Iraq.

## June

- 1 The Netherlands rejects the European Constitution.  
Ciampi asks Italy to “shake off the torpor that has spread so widely and avoid the subtle arguments that swallow up our daily life.”
- 2 Siniscalco protests to the European Commission about the document that Brussels is preparing on Italy’s public accounts, which will lead to the opening of a procedure for excessive deficit.  
Romano Prodi once again proposes primary elections and puts his own leadership on the table.

- 3 Rutelli announces he will abstain in the referendum; this provokes controversy within the center-left. For Sandro Bondi, coordinator of Forza Italia, the news opens up “new and unprecedented political prospects.”
- 4 Calderoli severely attacks Ciampi, whom he considers one of those “responsible” for Italy’s adoption of the euro.
- 5 In an official note, Berlusconi dissociates himself from the LN’s criticism of Ciampi and reminds ministers to “respect their own official position and those of the highest offices of the Republic.”
- 6 The LN announces that it intends to ask for a referendum to put the lira back into circulation alongside the euro. Critical comments by foreign governments and others.
- 7 The European Commission starts a procedure against Italy for its excessive deficit.
- 8 Fini says he considers the invitation to abstain in the referendum on artificial insemination “misguided,” provoking a bitter controversy within AN and the center-right.
- 9 After being held hostage for 24 days, the Italian volunteer Clementina Cantoni is released in Kabul.

Prodi criticizes the proponents of abstention in the referendum on artificial insemination.
- 10 ISTAT confirms the second consecutive fall in the GDP: Italy is technically in a recession.
- 12 On the first day of voting in the referendum, 18.7 percent of those eligible voted. The Church expresses its satisfaction.

The fourth-largest bank in the Eurozone is created by the Italian bank UniCredit and the German financial institution HypoVereinsbank.
- 13 The number of voters in the referendum on artificial insemination reaches only 25.9 percent. Giovanni Alemanno and Alfredo Mantovano resign from their positions in AN in protest against Fini’s position on the referendum.

Ciampi appeals to the Constitutional Court to rule on who has the power to grant pardons. The appeal follows yet another refusal by Justice Minister Castelli to approve pardons for Adriano Sofri and Ovidio Bompresì.
- 14 Berlusconi invites the Margherita to build with FI a “common house of the moderates.” The idea is rejected out of hand by Rutelli, but within the Margherita the risk of a split by the supporters of Prodi grows.
- 15 The government’s decision to postpone the reduction of the IRAP provokes reactions from the social partners. Berlusconi is whistled at the assembly of Confartigianato.

- 16 Agreement in the center-left: Prodi gives up the idea of presenting the Ulivo symbol on the proportional lists in the next election in return for primary elections to choose the center-left's leader.
- 19 Bossi says that he is opposed to the idea of a single center-right party.
- 20 The center-left parties decide to hold primary elections on 8 and 9 October to choose their candidate for premier. The secretaries of the center-left parties will sign an agreement that will last the whole term of the legislature.
- 21 During the inauguration of the Food Agency of Parma, Berlusconi defends the euro and reins in the LN.
- 22 Berlusconi denies any links between the real estate financier Stefano Ricucci and Mediaset in the takeover of Rizzoli-Corriere della Sera (RCS).
- 24 During the Pope's visit to the Quirinal Palace, Ciampi asserts the secular character of the state.
- 25 Berlusconi announces that at the end of July, the constituent committee to decide on the timing and procedure for the creation of the unified party of the center-right will begin its work.
- 26 Siniscalco and Almunia agree on a "re-entry path" for Italy's public accounts deficit: it will have until 2007 to bring the deficit down to the 3 percent ceiling.
- 28 The Senate approves the reform of the judiciary over the opposition's protests.
- 29 Following a meeting with Pierferdinando Casini, Gianfranco Fini, and Marco Follini, Berlusconi announces that he will be the center-right candidate for prime minister in the 2006 general election.
- 30 The government is defeated five times in the Chamber over the decree on competitiveness.

## July

- 1 During the UDC congress, Follini rejects the idea of a single party of the center-right, questions Berlusconi's leadership, and criticizes the government's record.
- 2 During the national assembly of AN, Fini calls the factions within the party "a creeping disease," attacks Follini, and defends Berlusconi's leadership.
- 3 Casini ends the UDC congress proposing the creation of a "party of moderates." Follini is re-elected as secretary.  
Fini concludes AN's assembly by patching up the internal rift.
- 4 Siniscalco outlines in advance the main points of the Economic and Financial Planning Document (Documento di Programmazione

Economico-Finanziaria, or DPEF): there will be no increase in the value-added tax, and he will fight against tax evasion.

- 5 The LN harshly attacks Ciampi during his speech to the European Parliament.

The government is defeated twice in the Chamber on the competitiveness package.

- 7 Four suicide bombers blow themselves up in London, leading to more than 50 deaths. Fears of terrorism grow in Italy as well.
- 8 Berlusconi announces that in September a gradual withdrawal of Italian soldiers from Iraq will begin.

Castelli announces that he will report those magistrates who strike on 14 July against the reform of the judiciary.

- 9 The government is working on a package of measures against terrorism. The LN proposes to declare a state of war in Italy.
- 11 Prodi expresses his opposition to special measures against terrorism and to the Italian mission in Iraq.
- 12 Pisanu presents the measures against terrorism in the Chamber. The LN criticizes them; the center-left is open to discussing them.
- 13 The government is divided on France's initiative to suspend the Schengen Treaty, following the recent terrorist attacks in London.
- 14 Fourth strike by magistrates against the reform of the judiciary.

Berlusconi announces that Italy will not suspend the Schengen Treaty.

- 15 Fini asks for the resignations of Ignazio La Russa and Altero Matteoli for some critical remarks against the AN leader in some newspapers. The two party chiefs apologize.

The cabinet gives the DPEF its approval.

- 16 Pisanu reiterates his decision to approve the anti-terrorism measures, challenging the LN and contradicting Berlusconi, who had downplayed their urgency in order to attenuate the conflict within the majority.
- 17 Unipol's board of directors gives the go-ahead for the acquisition of a majority share of the BNL.
- 18 Fini begins a reshuffle of the positions within AN by declaring them all vacant.
- 19 Meeting between Ciampi and Berlusconi to discuss some technical aspects and deadlines arising from the impending end of the legislature.
- 20 Parliament gives final approval to the reform of the judiciary, which the government had made a question of confidence.

According to ISTAT, the Italian balance of trade has reached the worst level since 1992.

- 21 In his first annual report, the chairman of the Communications Authority (Autorità per le Garanzie nelle Comunicazioni), Corrado Calabrò, characterizes the Gasparri law, passed in 2004, as backward.
- 22 Approval of the government's anti-terrorism plan; the Unione also supports it.
- 25 The Milan prosecutor's office orders the seizure of the shares of Banca Antonveneta (about 40 percent of the total capital) held by a group of shareholders who, it alleges, acted in concert to block ABN AMRO's public tender offer. Magistrates accuse Governor Fazio of having favored the president of the Banca Popolare Italiana (BPI), Gianpiero Fiorani.
- 26 Ciampi signs the reform of the judiciary.
- 27 In the face of strong opposition criticism, the Senate approves the "save Previti" law, which shortens the time limits for the prosecution of crimes.  
     CONSOB (the securities and exchange commission) suspends BPI's two takeover bids for Banca Antonveneta.
- 28 The leaders of the majority meet and discuss the Fazio issue. Only the LN openly lines up with the governor.
- 29 The Rome prosecutor's office opens an investigation of Unipol's takeover bid for BNL.
- 31 Casini says in an interview with *Corriere della Sera*: "Either the CdL changes or we lose our battle with Prodi."

## August

- 1 The government is considering introducing a limited term for the governor of the Bank of Italy. For the DS, Fazio's resignation would be "opportune."  
     Follini reaffirms the necessity of changing the leadership of the center-right.
- 2 The judge for preliminary investigations (GIP) of Milan decides to suspend the BPI's president, Fiorani, for two months.  
     Claudio Petruccioli is appointed chairman of RAI.
- 3 The cabinet assesses the situation surrounding the Bank of Italy. Siniscalco stresses that the ongoing events create "a problem of credibility for the country."
- 5 As a result of a majority vote of the board of directors, Alfredo Meocci becomes general manager of RAI.  
     Prodi says Fazio should resign.
- 6 Berlusconi calls the publication of telephone wiretaps that are part of the inquiries into the takeovers of RCS and Banca Antonveneta

“a scandal,” and announces a government bill to punish the publication of wiretaps.

- 8 Standard & Poor’s lowers its outlook for Italy from “stable” to “negative,” criticizing both the majority and the opposition because neither has shown it has the strength to make the unavoidable choices.

The banker Ubaldo Livolsi, who is close to Berlusconi, speaks in an interview with *Corriere della Sera* about an agreement with the real estate financier Ricucci to take over RCS.

- 9 Berlusconi denies he is involved in the takeover of RCS.
- 10 Documents of the Banca Antonveneta investigation accuse Fazio of having personally intervened in favor of the BPI, despite the fact that the Bank of Italy’s technical offices had pointed out problems with its balance sheet.

Prodi proposes an economic and financial code of conduct for candidates, elected representatives, and leaders of the Ulivo.

- 11 In the second semester of 2005, the GDP grew by 0.7 percent—the best result since the beginning of 2001.
- 12 The speaker of the Chamber, Pierferdinando Casini, writes to the president of the Milan Court, Vittorio Cardaci, to ask whether deputies have been wiretapped in the course of the Unipol-BNL investigation. He reminds him of the provisions of Article 68 of the Constitution.
- 16 Clash between Berlusconi and Casini on the leadership of the center-right for the next election.
- 17 Montezemolo declares that Fazio should have resigned as governor of the Bank of Italy. Positive reactions from the Unione; caution on the part of FI.
- 18 Prodi announces that one of the Unione’s priorities, in case of electoral success, will be the reduction of payroll taxes.

Berlusconi puts a damper on the question of Fazio’s resignation.

- 20 Prodi asks the parties of the Unione to end the controversy on political morality over the support given by the DS to Unipol in its bid for BNL.
- 21 During the festival of *Comunione e Liberazione*, Marcello Pera warns against the risk of multiculturalism and of a “half-breed society” (*meticciano*) that Europe faces.
- 22 Fazio requests an internal investigation of the actions of the two senior officials of the supervisory branch of the Bank who wrote the negative opinion on the BPI’s takeover of Banca Antonveneta.
- 23 Casini asks Berlusconi to create a party of moderates. Otherwise, he threatens, the creation of a party of the center could become a real possibility.

- 24 At the *Comunione e Liberazione* festival, Rutelli and Formigoni propose a pact among the reformists in the two poles to write common proposals on specific questions.
- 26 Fazio defends his actions in the affair of the banking takeovers before the Interministerial Committee for Credit and Savings (CICR).
- 27 The LN defends Fazio, whom it considers the guarantor of a “strong financial presence of a *padano* character.” The center-left is also divided: the Margherita asks that Parliament pronounce on Fazio’s resignation, while the DS are for taking more time.
- 28 FI Vice-Chairman and former Economy Minister Giulio Tremonti says that Fazio is “not irremovable.”  
The UDC declares that its position on devolution and the budget “cannot be taken for granted.”
- 30 The minister for European Community policies, Giorgio La Malfa, asks Fazio to resign.  
Follini asks Berlusconi once again for a signal of discontinuity in the government’s action.

## September

- 1 The governor of the ECB, Jean-Claude Trichet, initiates the assessment of the Fazio case.
- 2 The government approves the reform of the Bank of Italy: a limited term of seven years is introduced for the governor, with no age limit.
- 3 Casini asks the center-right for a signal of change; otherwise, the UDC will run alone in the next election.
- 4 Siniscalco asks for Fazio’s resignation. The LN lines up with the governor.
- 5 Berlusconi says that Siniscalco’s request for Fazio’s resignation is “legitimate.”
- 6 Fazio says he will not resign.
- 7 Meeting between Ciampi and Berlusconi on the Fazio case. For Fini, the governor has an “institutional duty to resign.”
- 8 Fazio decides not to attend the ECOFIN meeting in Manchester.  
The ECB voices its preoccupation about Italy’s public finances.
- 9 Berlusconi says that only the ECB can intervene to request Fazio’s resignation. The ECB responds that the Italian government has its responsibilities.  
Ciampi blocks the government’s proposal to use a decree law to change the legislation governing telephone wiretaps.
- 11 Prodi proposes civil pacts of solidarity (PACS) to regulate the status of *de facto* couples.

- 12 Fini lines up with Prodi on the question of PACS. The center-left is divided.
- 13 The CdL submits a proposal in the Chamber for an electoral reform based on proportional representation.
- 14 The Pole is divided on the electoral reform. For Fini, Parliament must first approve the constitutional reform and find a way of preserving bipolarism, as well as retaining the 4 percent barrier.
- 15 Ciampi admonishes the political forces on the issue of reforms: "We must not return to the past." On the Fazio case, he adds that "moral rectitude and ethical behavior are at the basis of our institutions."  
For the first time, the ECB looks specifically at the Banca Antonveneta case.
- 16 Prodi rejects Berlusconi's proposal of a dialogue on the electoral law. Ciampi invites the parties to focus on the most urgent problems of Italian society.
- 17 The LN and the UDC reject the proportional electoral reform because there is neither agreement in the majority nor dialogue with the opposition.
- 18 Prodi closes the Festa dell'Unità attacking the Pole on the electoral law.
- 19 Cardinal Ruini announces that the Italian bishops are opposed to the legal recognition of de facto couples.
- 21 The UDC criticizes Siniscalco's budget bill.  
Health Minister Storace issues an order suspending the experimental trials of the "abortion pill," RU486, under way in a hospital in Turin.
- 22 Siniscalco resigns. Tremonti returns to the Ministry of the Economy and Finance.
- 23 Tremonti and Fazio run into each other during the G7 summit in Washington, DC, but do not exchange a word.
- 25 Tremonti withdraws Fazio's mandate to represent Italy at the meeting of the IMF's Development Committee in Washington, DC.
- 26 Berlusconi is acquitted by the Milan Court in the All Iberian case because "the act is no longer defined as a crime."
- 27 Berlusconi defends the government's economic policy in Parliament.
- 28 The first trial concerning the collapse of Parmalat starts in Milan.
- 29 The cabinet approves the 2006 budget law.

The Superior Council of the Bank of Italy reaffirms its confidence in Fazio on the same day that the magistrates announce that the governor is being investigated for abuse of authority.

The Senate votes confidence in the government on the "Dispositions Regarding University Professors and Researchers."

## October

- 3 Casini asks Castelli for the official data on the effects of the implementation of the “save Previti” law and suggests to the government a postponement of the discussion on the floor of the Chamber.
- 4 Berlusconi threatens a government crisis if the proportional electoral reform is not approved.

Ciampi asks the political forces “not to wreck the Constitution.”
- 5 The reform of retirement bonuses (*trattamento di fine rapporto*, or TFR) is postponed. Welfare Minister Maroni denounces pressures from the business sector.

The Chamber votes confidence in the government on the “Measures to Counteract Violent Incidents during Sports Events.”

According to ISTAT, during the first six months of 2005, Italy’s government deficit reached 5.1 percent of GDP and the primary surplus fell to 0.1 percent.
- 6 The president’s technical staff express their doubts regarding the constitutionality of some points of the new electoral law.

The Senate approves a term limit for the governor of the Bank of Italy.
- 8 Montezemolo criticizes the existing single-member system because it does not guarantee governability.
- 9 Demonstration by the Unione in Rome against the budget and the electoral reform.
- 10 Fazio is interrogated for six hours by magistrates of the Rome prosecutor’s office on the Banca Antonveneta takeover bid.
- 12 Some center-right deputies disobey the whips to defeat the proposed “pink [i.e., female] quotas” for candidate lists in the new electoral law. Berlusconi invites the UDEUR and parts of the Margherita to enter the CdL.

The CSM appoints Piero Grasso as the national anti-Mafia prosecutor.
- 13 The Chamber approves the electoral reform, which now goes to the Senate.
- 14 The DS announce that they are willing to contribute to improving the electoral reform. Berlusconi rejects the offer.

The government launches a maneuver of 2 billion euros to correct the 2005 budget.
- 15 Follini resigns as secretary of the UDC as a result of conflict with the party line vis-à-vis Berlusconi and the center-right.
- 16 More than 4 million people participate in the primary election to choose the leader of the Unione. Romano Prodi gets 74.6 percent of the votes, against Bertinotti’s 14.6 percent and Mastella’s 4.4 percent.

The deputy speaker of the Regional Council of Calabria, Francesco Fortugno, is assassinated in Locri.

- 17 Prodi once again proposes Ulivo lists for the coming election. Rutelli is open to such a suggestion as long as it leads to the formation of the "Democratic Party."
- 18 The DS and the Margherita announce that they will present common lists for the Chamber at the next election.
- 19 Culture Minister Rocco Buttiglione threatens to resign in protest against the cuts in the field of culture contained in the budget bill.  
Berlusconi begins to discuss once again the reform of the *par condicio* law on equal access to the means of communication during election campaigns.
- 20 The Chamber gives a third reading to the constitutional reforms.  
Berlusconi moves ahead on the *par condicio*, but Casini reins him in.
- 22 Prodi says that the "political apportionment" (*lottizzazione*) of RAI's networks must be ended by choosing managers on the basis of "professionalism and autonomy." On the proportional electoral reform, Prodi confirms that he has "doubts regarding the constitutionality of the law."
- 23 The Nuovo PSI is close to a split. At the end of the congress, two secretaries, Bobo Craxi and Gianni De Michelis, are elected.
- 25 The Chamber approves the reform of the universities.
- 26 Ciampi pushes the government to "start from the real problems Italy is facing," now that the economy is showing signs of recovery.
- 27 At the European Council in London, Berlusconi asks that countries be allowed to engage in deficit spending.  
Lorenzo Cesa becomes the new secretary of the UDC.  
The Chamber votes confidence in the government on the "Urgent Measures in Agriculture and in Favor of Public Organizations in the Sector, and to Counteract Anomalous Price Movements in Agro-food Products."
- 28 The government launches a third corrective measure for 2005.  
The Margherita approves joint lists with the DS for the upcoming election.
- 29 Berlusconi announces that he tried to dissuade Bush and Blair from intervening in Iraq.
- 30 Creation of a new alliance between the SDI and the Radicals, with the symbol of a fist holding a rose.
- 31 Berlusconi meets with Bush in Washington, DC. At the end of the talks, the premier declares that "the US fears a change of government in Italy." The US government clarifies that it has no intention of intervening in the Italian election.

## November

- 2 Tehran summons the Italian ambassador twice to object to a demonstration in defense of Israel. The demonstration is in response to the declarations of President Ahmadinejad, who seeks the elimination of the Jewish state.
- 3 Thousands of people participate in the demonstration in defense of Israel in Rome.

The ECB closes the Fazio case, inviting the Italian government to modify the bill on savings and leaving doubt as to whether Fazio's behavior in the Banca Antonveneta affair was in conformity with the principles of the EU.

Berlusconi proposes to raise the age of retirement to 68.

- 4 In a meeting with Berlusconi, Ciampi manifests his doubts regarding the electoral law, the "save Previti" law, and modifications to the *par condicio*.

Sabino Cassese, Giuseppe Tesauro, and Maria Rita Sulle are appointed judges of the Constitutional Court by Ciampi.

- 5 Berlusconi denies there has been any conflict with Ciampi on the "save Previti" law, but tension is on the rise in the Pole. There is also unrest concerning the age of retirement: Fini argues that it cannot be increased.
- 6 The UDC presents an amendment to exclude defendants whose cases have already reached the Court of Appeal or the Court of Cassation from the benefits of the "save Previti" law. FI and AN disagree.
- 7 The center-left wins the communal election in Bolzano in the first round.
- 9 The Chamber approves the "save Previti" law but withholds its benefits from defendants whose trials are currently under way. The bill passes to the Senate.

The Senate votes confidence in the government on the proposals to combat tax evasion and on its urgent taxation and financial measures.

- 10 Ciampi asks the government for structural intervention in the economy, predicting a rise in international interest rates.

Conflict within the executive over measures to support the family.

- 11 The Senate votes confidence in the government on the 2006 budget bill.
- 12 Storace suggests that pro-life volunteers from the Movement for Life be present in clinics.
- 13 Defense Minister Antonio Martino declares that the withdrawal of Italian soldiers from Iraq should be gradual and be completed by the end of 2006.

- 14 The Constitutional Court declares that the decree law of July 2004, which mandated certain cuts in expenditure for the regions and local authorities, is illegitimate.
- 15 According to ISTAT, the Italian economy grew by 0.3 percent in the third quarter of 2005, and will grow by 0.1 percent over the whole year.
- 16 The Senate gives final approval to the reform package that modifies 50 articles in the Constitution; only the senators of the majority support it.
- 17 The Italian bishops criticize the federalist constitutional reforms. Criticisms also emerge within the CdL.  
 Criticism from Brussels on the state of Italy's public finances.
- 18 Cardinal Ruini expresses support for allowing Catholic volunteers from the Movement for Life to give advice in clinics.
- 19 Fini proposes that Ciampi remain as president for a second seven-year term. While expressing their support, many parties maintain that the discussion is premature.
- 20 The UDC proposes the establishment of a parliamentary committee on the implementation of law no. 194 (the law on abortion).
- 21 The *Osservatore Romano* attacks law no. 194, expressing its opposition to abortion.
- 22 Martino announces that the American nuclear submarines will leave the base at La Maddalena in Sardinia "according to a timetable and in conditions that will be determined later."  
 Berlusconi announces the withdrawal of Italian troops from Iraq by the end of 2006.
- 23 Ciampi responds to Fini's suggestion that he be re-elected in 2006: "I want to finish my term with dignity."
- 24 The cabinet approves the reform of retirement bonuses (the TFR).  
 The Chamber votes confidence in the government on the proposals to combat tax evasion and its urgent taxation and financial measures.
- 25 General strike against the budget law, called by the trade-union confederations.
- 26 According to Berlusconi, in 2005, 200 international terrorists were arrested in Italy.
- 27 Casini presents himself as a candidate to lead the next center-right government and attacks Berlusconi: "Italians are fed up with illusions and illusionism."  
 Prodi announces that the single-member electoral system will be restored if the center-left wins.
- 28 Casini denies having attacked Berlusconi.  
 The first round of the communal election in Messina ends with the candidates of the center-right and center-left in the run-off.

- 29 The Senate gives final approval to the ex-Cirielli law, which cuts the time limits for prosecution of those with clean records and increases the penalties for repeat offenders.

The Ulivo decides that Prodi will not be at the top of the center-left's list of candidates in all electoral districts in the next election. In Parliament, however, the center-left will form a single group.

- 30 In response to demonstrations in Val di Susa, where European transportation corridor no. 5 is to pass, Ciampi defends high-speed trains (TAV).

The Ulivo presents an amendment to the budget bill to introduce an allowance for economically disadvantaged women and thus limit the number of abortions.

## December

- 1 The ECB decides to increase interest rates to 2.25 percent. Disagreement expressed by national governments, including Italy.

- 2 In front of a DS audience, Prodi proposes to return to the single-member system if the center-left wins the next election.

In Rome, tens of thousands of metal workers demonstrate for the renewal of their contract, which has been held up for 11 months.

- 3 The DS policy conference in Florence ends with an appeal by Fassino to relaunch the idea of the "Democratic Party."

- 4 Casini authorizes a parliamentary investigation into the implementation of the law on abortion.

Rita Borsellino wins the primary elections of the Unione in Sicily.

- 5 The Unione reaches agreement on including the legal regulation of de facto couples and a "rapid" withdrawal from Iraq in its program.

- 6 The police intervene in Val di Susa to remove anti-TAV barricades, provoking a sharp clash between majority and opposition.

The chairman and CEO of Unipol, Giovanni Consorte, is investigated by the Milan prosecutor's office for stock manipulation in BPI's takeover bid for Banca Antonveneta.

- 7 The government talks about extremists infiltrating the protests against high-speed trains in Val di Susa. In a meeting of leaders of the majority, Gianni Letta is given the responsibility of coordinating the assessment of its impact on health and the environment.

- 8 New clashes in Val di Susa between protesters and the police; the construction sites are occupied again.

- 10 Meeting between the government and the local authorities of the Val di Susa. An agreement is reached that provides for the suspension of construction and the opening of discussions.

12 The center-left candidate, Francantonio Genovese, wins the second round of the communal election in Messina.

13 The European Commission launches the infraction procedure against Italy for the Bank of Italy's behavior in the takeover bids for BNL and Banca Antonveneta. The banker Fiorani is arrested on the charge of conspiracy in the second bid.

Once again, Castelli refuses to grant Sofri a pardon. The president's office announces that it will refer the conflict of jurisdiction over pardons to the Constitutional Court.

14 With only the majority voting in favor, the Senate gives final approval to the proportional electoral reform.

Standard & Poor's threaten to lower Italy's rating again.

15 The Milan prosecutor's office investigates Fazio to ascertain whether he divulged confidential information to Fiorani. The Rome prosecutors open an investigation of the chairman of Unipol, Consorte, whom they suspect of stock price manipulation and distortion of the market.

The Chamber votes confidence in the government on the 2006 budget bill.

16 Tremonti asks for Fazio's resignation.

17 The Rome prosecutor's office asks the Bank of Italy to provide the records of the governor's meetings on the Unipol-BNL affair, thus opening a second line of investigation against Fazio. The government, with the exception of the LN, hurries to approve the law on savings and thus force Fazio's resignation.

19 Fazio resigns from his position as governor of the Bank of Italy "to restore tranquility, in the higher interest of the country."

20 The government reaches agreement on three amendments to the law on savings. One fixes the length of the term of office of the governor of the Bank of Italy at six years. A second amendment gives the power to appoint the governor to the government with the agreement of the president of the Republic, and a third divides responsibility for supervising bank mergers between the Bank of Italy and the Anti-trust Authority.

Ciampi admonishes holders of high office to respect "not only the law but also ethical and societal norms."

21 A government amendment to the law on savings assigns responsibility for bank mergers to the Anti-trust Authority.

The Greens and the Party of Italian Communists (PdCI) decide to create joint lists for the Senate for the upcoming election.

22 Ciampi signs the new electoral law.

The Anti-trust Authority launches a preliminary investigation of Berlusconi for possible violation of the law on conflict of interest

because of the allocations in the budget to subsidize the purchase of decoder boxes for digital cable television.

- 23 The Senate approves, on a question of confidence, the bill that reforms legislation on savings and the Bank of Italy. The ECB immediately gives the reforms its approval.

Berlusconi announces that the next general election will take place on 9 April.

- 25 Demonstration in Rome in favor of an amnesty for prisoners, organized by the Radicals.

- 27 Special session of the Chamber to discuss an amnesty. Few deputies are present.

- 28 News of another summons to Berlusconi to appear before a magistrate for corruption of witnesses in the trial for bribery of the revenue police and in the All Iberian case.

The chairman of Unipol, Giovanni Consorte, and his deputy, Ivano Sacchetti, resign as a result of the judicial investigations.

- 29 Mario Draghi is appointed as the new governor of the Bank of Italy.

- 31 Ciampi delivers the last speech of his seven-year mandate. He recalls the highlights of his activity as president and appeals to the young.

— *Translated by Marie-Eve Rény*

