

PRESENT POLITICAL SITUATION

During 1979 the LDP decline appeared to be reversing. In the spring elections at the local and prefectural level, LDP or DLP-supported candidates enjoyed successes, particularly in the urban centres. This apparent resurgence of conservative popularity among the electorate led to demands within the ruling Party for an autumn election, with a view to restoring its majority in the Diet.

Prime Minister Ohira, who presided over this improvement in LDP fortunes, had come to office as a result of a party election late in 1978 in which he successfully challenged his predecessor, Mr. Fukuda, for the Presidency of the party. The success of the Tokyo Economic Summit in June, 1979, increased the pressure on the Prime Minister to call an election, even though the other Party "barons" continued to oppose an appeal to the electorate based solely on the restoration of the LDP majority. He and his factional advisors decided to go to the polls on October 7, 1979, not only to restore an LDP majority, but also to cement his leadership.