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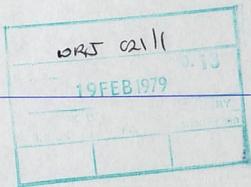
Telex 61049 Telephone 4755.441

Miss P Kenwick
WED
FCO

Your reference

Our reference

Date 1 February 1979



Dear Pat,

GROMYKO'S VISIT TO ROME: 22/26 JANUARY

(T)

- A
1. Would you please refer to our telegram no 75 about the Community briefing given by the Italian Political Director on 29 January.
 2. You may like to have a brief note of one or two other points which Gardini made during the briefing. First, on the question of commercial exchanges between Italy and the Soviet Union, Gardini said that the Italians were rather pleased at the Russian desire to continue and increase bilateral trade and to make longer term agreements. On the other hand the Italians found the Russians displeased with the EEC over the question of relations between the EEC and COMECON. As regards the Middle East, the Italians thought that Gromyko had given the impression of considerable satisfaction at the fact that the Russians were on the side of the large majority of Arab governments. On Iran the Russians had seemed to avoid anything except indirect references, perhaps because they had not yet fully thought out their policy. As regards Southern Africa Gromyko had given a confident impression, as if he thought that the imperialist powers were on the way out and that the resulting situation would be quite favourable to Russian interests.
 3. The Ambassador talked to Gromyko briefly at the reception given by the Russian Ambassador on 25 January. Gromyko spoke warmly of his many visits to London. The Ambassador commented afterwards that he showed no sign of ill health and looked exactly as he had seen him look for the last 20 years. There was a large turnout of Italian Ministers and personalities at the reception, including several leading Italian Communists. Gromyko was reported in the press to have had a "cordial" conversation during the reception with the Communist Party Secretary, Berlinguer.
 4. As you will have seen from the communique, a translation of which we have sent under separate cover, four relatively minor bilateral Italo-Soviet agreements were signed during the visit. These were a Convention on legal assistance in civil matters; a Protocol to the Cultural Agreement of 9 February 1960 on cooperation between the Hermitage Museum and the Uffizi Gallery; a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in astrophysics; and the instruments of ratification of an agreement of 20 November 1975 to prevent double taxation in maritime navigation matters.



5. Andreotti's diplomatic adviser, La Rocca, told the Ambassador on 30 January that Andreotti had been quite pleased with the visit although he had not attached great importance to it. He was gratified at the trade aspects, and for the rest supposed that Gromyko had been more interested in talking to the Pope than in talking to Italian Ministers.
6. Alan Goodison is writing separately to Ewen Fergusson about the question of arms for China (para 3 of our telegram under reference).
7. I should be grateful if you would give this letter any further distribution you think necessary.

*Yours ever,
Mark*

M E Fellow

cc:

Chanceries: Moscow
Washington
Holy See

Pa. (7)

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TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 75 OF 29 JANUARY

INFO ROUTINE MOSCOW, EEC POSTS, WASHINGTON, PEKING.

GROMYKO'S VISIT TO ROME

1. I ATTENDED TODAY AN EEC BRIEFING GIVEN BY POLITICAL DIRECTOR AT THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.
2. GARDINI SAID THAT VISIT HAD BEEN RATHER LONGER THAN STRICTLY NECESSARY IN ORDER TO ALLOW FOR THE INSERTION OF A DAY IN WHICH GROMYKO COULD SEE THE POPE, AND FOR SOME LEISURE WHICH THE RUSSIANS HAD ASKED FOR IN ORDER TO SPARE GROMYKO UNDUE PRESSURE. TALKS HAD COVERED THE WHOLE WORLD SCENE BUT HAD NOT REVEALED ANY NEW SLANT OF SOVIET POLICY SO FAR AS THE ITALIANS COULD DISCERN. THE ONLY TOPIC ON WHICH GROMYKO HAD SHOWN EXCEPTIONAL ANIMATION WAS CAMBODIA, ABOUT WHICH HE HAD USED VIOLENT LANGUAGE. FOR THE REST, INCLUDING HIS REFERENCES TO CHINE, HE HAD BEEN VERY BLAND WHILE SHOWING HIMSELF AS ALWAYS MASTER OF THE APPROVED SOVIET LINE OF ARGUMENT.
3. GARDINI SAID THAT THE ITALIANS DID NOT FIND GROMYKO VERY PRESSING ABOUT ARMS FOR CHINA. HE DID NOT SEEM TO BE PARTICULARLY SURPRISED BY THE FIRMFNESS OF THE ITALIAN ATTITUDE. AS REGARDS IRAN, GROMYKO HAD CONTRASTED THE OPEN BUT FUTILE INTERVENTIONS OF THE AMERICANS WITH THE BENEFICIAL AND STABILISING EFFECT OF SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN THE HORN OF AFRICA.

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/ 4. MY IMPRESSION

4. MY IMPRESSION IS THAT THIS HAS NOT BEEN A VERY IMPORTANT VISIT EITHER FOR THE ITALIANS OR FOR THE RUSSIANS. PERHAPS GROMYKO WAS MAINLY INTERESTED IN MAKING AN ASSESSMENT OF THE POPE.

5. A TRANSLATION OF THE SOVIET/ITALIAN COMMUNIQUE FOLLOWS BY BAG.

CAMPBELL

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