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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 130 OF 21 MARCH 1979

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MY TELNO 126: ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION.

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RECEIVED	3:13
22 MAR 1979	
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1. ANDREOTTI PRESENTED THE LIST OF NAMES OF HIS NEW THREE-PARTY (CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT/REPUBLICAN/SOCIAL DEMOCRAT) GOVERNMENT TO PRESIDENT PERTINI ON 20 MARCH. MOST OF THE IMPORTANT PORTFOLIOS REMAIN UNCHANGED (INCLUDING FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE, INTERIOR, FINANCE, TREASURY AND AGRICULTURE). BUT SEVEN FORMER CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT MINISTERS HAVE BEEN DROPPED, INCLUDING THE TWO NON-PARLIAMENTARY TECHNICIANS OSSOLA AND PRODI. THE SEVEN NEW MINISTERS ARE THREE RUPUBLICANS - LA MALFA (DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND BUDGET), SPADOLINI (EDUCATION) AND COMPAGNA (PUBLIC WORKS) - AND FOUR SOCIAL DEMOCRATS - DI GIESI (THE SOUTH), PRETI (TRANSPORT AND MERCHANT NAVY), NICOLAZZI (INDUSTRY) AND ARIOSTO (TOURISM). THE COMPLETE LIST IS IN MIFT.

2. IT IS WIDELY ASSUMED THAT THIS NEW GOVERNMENT (ANDREOTTI'S FIFTH) WILL MERELY SERVE AS A BRIDGE UNTIL EARLY ELECTIONS. COMMENT ON THE APPOINTMENTS HAS SO FAR BEEN CORRESPONDINGLY MUTED. THERE IS, HOWEVER, SOME CARPING FROM THE LEFT ABOUT THE "UNPRESENTABILITY" OF THE NEW MINISTERS, PARTICULARLY THE FOUR SOCIAL DEMOCRATS (WHO ARE INDEED A PRETTY UNDISTINGUISHED GROUP), AND ABOUT THE FACT THAT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT FACTION LEADERS HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO KEEP THEIR JOBS TO THE EXCLUSION OF THE TWO "TECHNICIANS" (WHICH WAS PERHAPS THE ONLY REAL SURPRISE ABOUT THE LIST).

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3. AFTER ANNOUNCING HIS NEW GOVERNMENT ANDREOTTI SAID THAT IT WOULD PRESENT ITSELF TO PARLIAMENT "WITHIN THE TEN DAYS LAID DOWN BY THE CONSTITUTION". THE PRECISE TIMETABLE REMAINS UNCERTAIN, BUT IT IS EXPECTED THAT A DEBATE ON A MOTION OF CONFIDENCE WILL START ON ABOUT 29 OR 30 MARCH, WITH THE VOTE TAKING PLACE ON ABOUT 2 APRIL. ASSUMING THE VOTE IS LOST, THIS WOULD ALLOW A GENERAL ELECTION TO BE HELD AT THE SAME TIME AS THE EUROPEAN ELECTIONS ON 10 JUNE.

4. IT STILL CANNOT BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED (FOR REASONS EXPLAINED IN PARA 3 OF MY TUR) THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL NOT OBTAIN A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN PARLIAMENT. BUT THE CHANCES OF SOCIALIST ABSTENTIONS APPEAR TO HAVE RECEDED STILL FURTHER FOLLOWING THE CANCELLATION YESTERDAY (20 MARCH) BY CRAXI OF A PLANNED MEETING BETWEEN THE SOCIALISTS AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. CRAXI SAID THAT IT WOULD NOW BE POINTLESS TO HOLD SUCH A MEETING SINCE THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS HAD PRODUCED A GOVERNMENT "MERELY TO MANAGE THE ELECTIONS".

5. PLEASE SEE M I F T.

6. PLEASE PASS SAVING TO OTHER ADDRESSEES.

7. PLEASE DISTRIBUTE ADVANCE COPIES TO : -

MR BULLARD (DUS) MR FERGUSSON (AUS) AND W E D.

ADAMS

[ADVANCED AND REPEATED AS REQUESTED]

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