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to copy as rec. pl.

2. Mr. Gladstone O/R

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R.V. 29/5

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Our reference

Date 22 May 1979

My dear David,

SOVIET AND AMERICAN VIEWS OF THE ITALIAN INTERNAL SITUATION

1. On 18 May the Soviet Ambassador gave a farewell lunch for Alan Campbell. The lunch was attended exclusively by members of their staffs. After lunch the two Ambassadors moved aside and Alan Campbell asked the Soviet Ambassador how he viewed the prospects for the Italian elections.

2. As I understand it from Alan Campbell (who left almost at once for a farewell visit to Sardinia) the Soviet Ambassador gave a very full and balanced analysis of the Italian scene. He said that the Christian Democrat Party had gone into the election campaign expecting to receive 5 or 6% more votes than they had achieved in 1976. As the campaign had gone on they had become less optimistic. They now thought that the increase in their votes would not be much more than 2%. As for the PCI, they had hoped to maintain their share of the vote. This was nonsense. They were bound to lose votes. For instance, the Radical Party might well achieve as much as 5% (compare our forecast in Rome telno 152 of 8 May). There was nowhere they could get these votes from but the PCI electors. Furthermore, although the Socialists were not handling the campaign very effectively, they were still likely to increase their votes, at the expense of the PCI. It was likely therefore that there would be no great change in the number of seats held by the Christian Democrats and the Communists but that whatever change there was would be to the advantage of the Christian Democrats. Their leadership was however so much at sixes and sevens that they were unlikely to benefit greatly from it. Alan Campbell was struck by the realistic approach of the Soviet Ambassador, whose analysis does not differ greatly from our own.

3. I reported this conversation on 21 May to the American Minister, Allen Holmes; he agreed that this was a sensible analysis. He said that it was not very different from what he had gleaned from Italian journalists in touch with the PCI as being the party's own analysis of the scene. He was however concerned (as we know the Christian Democrats are) at the evidence of a growing feeling of indifference among the Italian electorate/the political parties. He commented,

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as we have done within this Embassy, on the boring character of the election campaign. He feared that this would have an affect on turnout which would damage the interests of the Christian Democrats. The PCI were much more capable of getting their electors to the polls and this could have a significant affect on the results.

4. We also discussed the Socialists. I told him that the Soviet Ambassador had said to Alan Campbell that, whatever Craxi's skill at holding the party together, in the last analysis, he was an unattractive man, and the Italians did not like voting for such a man. Holmes was much struck by the sophistication of this observation. He said, however, that he had heard that when the Socialist Party was establishing its list of candidates Craxi had continuously overruled the proposals of the left-wing of the party, represented by Signorile, for furthering their interests, and he believed that Craxi was therefore still in a position to make his will felt within the party.

5. I conclude that there is a broad measure of agreement between the Soviet, the American and the British Embassies in Rome that the analysis given in our telno 152 is accurate.

Yours ever,
Alan

A C Goodison

cc:
Chanceries: MOSCOW, WASHINGTON
Mrs K Colvin, Research Dept, FCO