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Reference

Mr. Keeler
Mr. Keeling

H. O. 19

Mr. Peilew

cc. to H. G. (WED) in bag 19/11
Coped 19/11/11

NOTE OF A CALL ON SIGNOR ZACCAGNINI

ON 15 NOVEMBER 1979

(Security, DC)

1. As it happened I called on Signor Zaccagnini just before he was to meet with Signor Cossiga, Signor Piccoli and other leaders of the DC.

2. The present Government. I asked what was the object of the meeting that evening. Signor Zaccagnini said it was to bolster the Government. It was faced with serious problems - he named only energy, inflation and unemployment. It needed help. Some progress needed to be shown in the run-up to the DC Congress. The disarray of the other Parties gave the DC an opportunity to sort itself out. His role was to work for Party unity. He was throwing his weight behind the strengthening of the Cossiga Government. He did not make the point that stability was important during the Italian Presidency of the EEC next year, but of course he agreed wholeheartedly when I made it.

3. The Socialists. Collaboration was extremely difficult, mainly because of the attitude of Craxi himself. Signor Zaccagnini saw no likelihood of any early changes within the Socialist Party which would facilitate collaboration with the DC, although with the Communists in disarray this was the most promising way to provide a solid majority.

4. The Communists. Signor Zaccagnini favoured a middle road. Confrontation was undesirable and some way must be found of bringing them along without their direct participation in the Government. I said that was no doubt highly desirable but the Communists lost votes precisely because they had got into that situation. Something rather different seemed to be required. Signor Zaccagnini produced no new ideas.

5. The Succession. I asked Signor Zaccagnini who was going to be his successor in the Party. He said he supposed this would be decided by a vote at the Congress early next year, although voting was unsatisfactory in some ways. Alternatively, the

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decision might be made afterwards by the Council. He himself had been elected. He averred that the question of the succession was not linked to that of an heir to President Pertini, though I suggested that the two were linked because some people might be candidates for either job. However, he took refuge in saying that President Pertini was robust and should be in office for some time yet.

6. Constitutional Reform. Signor Zaccagnini, like most others, did not think there was much in this. The wilder proposals would get nowhere e.g. abolition of the Senate or modifying proportional representation. On the other hand there might be agreement on some modest step like the President not being able to stand for re-election. There was also a need - and perhaps something could be done - to improve procedures in the Assembly where the Radicals were at the moment able to take effective and disruptive blocking action. The difficulty was that the Radicals would block any change.

7. TNF. Signor Zaccagnini seemed reasonably optimistic about the outcome but said that Signor Andreotti's recent statement about the need to compromise had been unhelpful. Indeed this led him to say that there was a good deal too much talking out of turn in the DC and he personally deplored the machinations and factions ~~and factions~~ which bedevilled the Party at present. 11x

8. EEC. I took the opportunity of putting the UK case on the Budget and Signor Zaccagnini agreed that something must be done about it.

9. Future contacts. Signor Zaccagnini said firmly that he was not available for dinners or even lunches, but that he would be happy to see me at any time in his office over a cup of coffee.

10. At that point Signor Cossiga arrived and we had to break off.

16 November 1979

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