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DESK OFFICER	PA	REPLY
INDEX	PA	action Taken
Your reference		<i>(initials)</i>

D S Keeling Esq
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FCO
LONDON SW1

Our reference 014/5

Date 7 February 1980

Dear David,

ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION: ANTI-TERRORIST MEASURES

- ③ 1. Our telegram no. 94 reported that Signor Cossiga had been obliged, in the face of filibustering by the Radicals, to make the vote on the Government's package of anti-terrorist measures a vote of confidence.
2. The vote of confidence duly took place on 2 February and, as expected, was carried by an overwhelming majority (522 in favour, 50 against and 8 abstentions). A separate vote was then taken on the measures themselves (446 in favour, 79 against and 5 abstentions). The Communists and Socialists were among those who officially supported the government in both votes, though there were a number of absences - particularly on the second vote - and at least five left-wing Socialists went against their party line. The only parties who voted against the motion of confidence were the Radicals, the Neo-fascists and the PDUP (a small far-left party).
3. For four days preceding the vote the Chamber of Deputies was in permanent session while the 18 Radicals mounted a marathon talk-in, during which four of them spoke for over ten hours each. This absurd spectacle, apart from increasing the disrepute in which Parliament is already held in popular esteem, benefited the Radicals nothing since it merely alienated the other left-wing parties who would otherwise have been prepared to make common cause with them in seeking some amendments to the decree law, which the Government would probably have had to concede. (Details of the decree law were contained in the enclosure to my letter to you of 18 December. The particular points which the Left would have liked to see amended were the increased powers of provisional arrest by the police, increased periods of preventive detention and increased powers to search buildings. But the substance of the issue was almost totally obscured by the Radicals' filibustering)

/4. Thus



4. Thus the decree has passed into law, unamended, well before the 60-day deadline of 14 February. At the same time, Signor Cossiga has obtained a vote of confidence including the support of both Communists and Socialists. This vote, however, is something of a hollow victory, because everyone knows it is only a "technical" vote of confidence designed to get round the difficulties created by the Radicals, whom everybody is united in opposing.
5. The real political debate is going on elsewhere, in the run-up to the DC Congress which opens on 15 February. Everybody is talking about "after Cossiga", but as yet there is still no clear idea about what the "after Cossiga" will be. Things may be a little clearer after the DC Congress. But in Italy these so-called turning points have a habit, when they actually come, of not actually clarifying anything very much.

Yours ever,

Mark

M E Pellew

cc:
HM Consul-General, MILAN