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TO PRIORITY FCO  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 383 OF 10 JUNE  
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11 JUN 1980  
NOTEN AND MILAN

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MYTEL NR 364: ITALIAN INTERNAL SITUATION

1. IN LOCAL ELECTIONS ON 8-9 JUNE THE ADMINISTRATIONS OF MOST OF ITALY'S REGIONS, PROVINCES AND COMMUNES WERE UP FOR RENEWAL FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 1975. THE PROVINCIAL AND COMMUNAL RESULTS ARE STILL COMING IN, BUT IT IS CLEAR FROM THE FINAL RESULTS IN THE REGION THAT THERE HAS BEEN A MODERATE DECLINE IN THE COMMUNIST VOTE (31.5%) AS COMPARED WITH THEIR STRONG SHOWING IN 1975 (WHEN THEY SCORED 33.4%) AND WITH THE GENERAL ELECTION IN 1979 (31.8%). THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (36.8%) AND THE SMALL CENTRE PARTIES HAVE HELD UP WELL. THE SOCIALISTS (12.7%) HAVE SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED ON THEIR PERFORMANCE IN BOTH PREVIOUS ELECTIONS. THE TURN OUT WAS 88.5%, DOWN 3% ON 1975.

2. LOCAL ISSUES PLAYED A VERY SMALL PART IN THE ELECTIONS, WHICH WERE SEEN ESSENTIALLY AS A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT. THE FAVOURABLE OUTCOME FOR THE THREE COALITION PARTIES IS THUS LIKELY TO GIVE A CONSIDERABLE BOOST TO THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT AND TO SIGNOR COSSIGA PERSONALLY. THE COMMUNIST ATTACK ON COSSIGA OVER THE DONAT-CATTIN AFFAIR (MYTELS NRS 363 AND 364) DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE HAD ANY SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE EFFECT ON THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT VOTE (UP 1.5% ON 1975) AND MAY EVEN HAVE BROUGHT IN SOME SYMPATHY VOTES. IT IS THOUGHT LIKELY THAT THE AFFAIR WILL NOW DIE DOWN FOR THE TIME BEING, PROBABLY AT LEAST UNTIL THE AUTUMN. THE MARKED SUCCESS OF THE SOCIALISTS SHOULD STRENGTHEN CRAXI'S HAND AGAINST THE LEFT WING OF HIS PARTY, THUS REDUCING THE RISK OF AN EARLY UPSET OF THE COSSIGA COALITION.

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3. OF THE OPPOSITION PARTIES THE SMALL LIBERAL PARTY DID QUITE WELL, REFLECTING THE HIGH PERSONAL STANDING OF ITS LEADER ZANONE. FOR THE TIME BEING THERE IS LITTLE POSSIBILITY OF EITHER THE LIBERALS OR THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS BEING BROUGHT INTO THE COALITION BECAUSE OF THE SOCIALISTS' REFUSAL TO JOIN IN GOVERNMENT WITH PARTIES OF SUCH CLEAR ANTI-COMMUNIST VIEWS. BUT IN THE LONGER TERM, IF THE SOCIALIST SUCCESS ENABLES CRAXI TO ESTABLISH HIS AUTHORITY OVER HIS LEFT WING, TODAY'S RESULTS COULD POINT THE WAY TOWARDS THE CREATION OF A MORE BROADLY BASED NON-COMMUNIST ALLIANCE.

4. AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL, THE COMMUNISTS WILL NO LONGER BE THE LARGEST PARTY IN THE PIEDMONT OR LAZIO (THE REGION ABOUT ROME) AND WILL PROBABLY ALSO LOSE CONTROL OF LIGURIA.

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5. ITALIAN COMMENTATORS ARE MAKING MUCH OF THE FACT THAT THE NON-VOTERS, PLUS THOSE WHO RECORDED SPOILT OR BLANK PAPERS, TOGETHER ADDED UP TO 17%, MAKING THEM THE THIRD LARGEST "PARTY" AFTER THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND THE COMMUNISTS. AN 88.5% TURNOUT, ALTHOUGH HIGH BY MOST EUROPEAN STANDARDS, IS IN FACT A RECORD LOW IN AN ITALIAN REGIONAL ELECTION. IT IS GENERALLY UNDERSTOOD THAT THERE MAY BE ADMINISTRATIVE PENALTIES FOR THOSE WHO DO NOT VOTE. THE NUMBER OF ABSTENTIONS WILL HAVE BEEN SWOLLEN THIS TIME BY THE RADICAL PARTY, WHO URGED THEIR SUPPORTERS TO RECORD BLANK VOTES; IT ALSO SUGGESTS SOME DISILLUSIONMENT AMONG THE ELECTORATE ABOUT THE QUALITY OF THE CHOICES OFFERED TO THEM. WHATEVER THE POPULAR MOOD, THE VOTES HAVE BEEN CAST IN A WAY HELPFUL TO THE COSSIGA GOVERNMENT. COSSIGA HIMSELF THUS GETS A WELCOME BOOST BEFORE THE VENICE MEETINGS.

FCO PSE PASS SAVING ADDRESSEES

THIS TELEGRAM  
WAS NOT  
ADVANCED

ARCULUS

(REPEATED AS REQUESTED)

FCO WHITEHALL DIST:  
WED