

Italy

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FM ROME 130935Z OCT
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 559 OF 13 OCTOBER
INFO SAVING ALL EC POSTS, WASHINGTON AND UKDEL NATO

MT

MY TELNO 554: ITALIAN INTERNAL SITUATION

1. PRESIDENT PERTINI GAVE ME A PRIVATE AND MORE DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION ON 11 OCTOBER OVER A TETE-A-TETE LUNCH AT THE QUIRINALE.
2. HE SAID HE HAD JUST SEEN FORLANI, WHO FOUND HE WOULD NEED FURTHER TIME FOR HIS CONSULTATIONS BUT HAD WITHIN HIS GRASP THE POSSIBILITY OF A FOUR-PARTY GOVERNMENT OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, SOCIALISTS, REPUBLICANS AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATS. IT REMAINED TO BE SEEN HOW OR IF THE LIBERALS COULD BE ASSOCIATED. FORLANI HAD JUST SEEN BERLINGUER (COMMUNIST) AND WAS ENCOURAGED BY HIS MORE TEMPERATE ATTITUDE. (BERLINGUER WAS NON-COMMITTAL TO THE PRESS WHICH SPECULATES THAT THE PCI IS LOOKING FOR PROGRESS IN THE FIAT DISPUTE OVER REDUNDANT WORKERS). PERTINI COMMENTED THAT BERLINGUER KNEW HXPHAD OVERPLAYED HIS HAND IN ATTACKING COSSIGA'S GOVERNMENT.
3. ON TIMING FORLANI WILL NOW HOLD MORE DETAILED TALKS WITH THE FOUR PARTIES TO WORK OUT DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS PROGRAMMES, IN THE FIRST HALF OF THIS WEEK. THE PRESIDENT SAID FORLANI MIGHT BE READY ON 18 OCTOBER WITH A SLATE OF MINISTERS WHO COULD BE SWORN IN AS EARLY AS 19 OCTOBER.
4. IN STRICT CONFIDENCE HE GAVE ME THE CHEERING NEWS THAT HE DESIRED COLOMBO TO BE RETAINED AS FOREIGN MINISTER AND HAD MADE THIS CLEAR TO FORLANI.

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ON THIS TIMING IT WOULD BE A CRISIS OF UNUSUALLY SHORT DURATION. SNAGS MAY YET ARISE, AND IT SEEMS NECESSARY THAT THERE SHOULD BE SOME BREAKTHROUGH IN THE VERY DIFFICULT FIAT SITUATION. A FORLANI-LED COALITION WITH COLOMBO AS FOREIGN MINISTER SHOULD NOT BE BAD FOR US. WE SHALL MISS COSSIGA BUT HE IS A SPENT FORCE AT PRESENT.

6. THE PRESIDENT REITERATED THAT THE QUEEN WILL FIND A VERY WARM WELCOME HERE, DESPITE THE CRISIS. HE ALSO SPOKE MOST WARMLY OF THE PRIME MINISTER.

7. ON THE POLITICAL SITUATION PRESIDENT PERTINI SPOKE IN CONFIDENCE AND SHOULD NOT BE QUOTED. WHAT HE SAID ABOUT TIMING IS NOW REFLECTED IN THE PRESS.

FCO PASS SAVING.

ARCULUS

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STANDARD

[REPEATED AS REQUESTED]

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