

NR 519/25

26/6
Mr Bullard
Mr Ferguson

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WRJ 014/2

PP FCO 26 JUN 1981

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I am sure there is something in the "Mitterrand effect"

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FRENCH ELECTIONS AND FORMATION OF GOVERNMENT:
ITALIAN REACTIONS

for what it is worth neither the Italian Defence Attache nor the Consul-General believe the "Mitterrand effect" theory, putting the results as anti DC.

1. THE RESULTS OF THE FRENCH LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS AND THE INCLUSION OF COMMUNIST MINISTERS IN GOVERNMENT COME IN A WEEK WHEN THE ITALIAN SOCIALISTS (PSI) HAVE MADE SUBSTANTIAL GAINS IN ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS (MY TELNO 239), ALBEIT FROM A MODEST STARTING POINT.

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2. ITALIAN INTEREST IN FRENCH DEVELOPMENTS THEREFORE CONCENTRATES ON WHETHER THE "MITTERRAND EFFECT" CONTRIBUTED TO THE PSI SUCCESS. IT IS GENERALLY FELT THAT ALTHOUGH THERE IS NO DIRECT CAUSED LINK, THE PSI MAY HAVE BENEFITTED BY THE FRENCH EXAMPLE: IF CHANGE IS POSSIBLE IN FRANCE IT SHOULD NOT BE EXCLUDED IN ITALY. THERE IS ALSO SPECULATION THAT THE RESULTS IN ITALY AND FRANCE TOGETHER MAY POINT TO A GENERAL MOVE TO THE LEFT IN EUROPE.

3. SOCIALIST COMMENT HAS SOUGHT TO PRESENT THE PSI LEADER, CRAXI, AS THE "ITALIAN MITTERRAND" WHILE CONTRIVING ALSO TO SUGGEST THAT THE PSI'S GAINS ARE DUE TO THEIR OWN MERITS AND NOT TO OUTSIDE INFLUENCE. THE COMMUNISTS (PCI) HAVE WELCOMED WHAT THEY CLAIM TO SEE AS A VICTORY FOR THE LEFT AS A WHOLE. THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT RIGHT-WING SEEK TO BLAME GISCARD FOR HAVING LET THE SIDE DOWN AND FOR THEIR POOR SHOWING.

4. THE APPOINTMENT OF PCF MINISTERS HAS AROUSED WIDESPREAD INTEREST BUT MOST COMMENTATORS, INCLUDING THE PCI, RECOGNISE THAT THE PCF HAS MADE SUBSTANTIAL CONCESSIONS AS THE PRICE OF THESE APPOINTMENTS. THE PCI UNDERLINE THAT A UNITED LEFT GOVERNMENT IS NOW IN POWER IN FRANCE. THEY WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST THAT THIS UNDERLINES THE NEED FOR A UNITED LEFT ALTERNATIVE IN ITALY SEMICOLON BUT CIRCUMSTANCES ARE TOO DISSIMILAR FOR THIS TO CARRY MUCH CREDIBILITY IN THE SHORT TERM.

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