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Mr D G Manning
EESD
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2. Mr Sam M

18 February 1982

Dear David,

Jan 19/ii

RELATIONS BETWEEN SOVIET AND ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTIES

1. Our saving telex 4 reported the latest Pravda article on Soviet differences with the PCI, and separately you and Chancery Rome will have received a full English translation.

✓ 2. The point of the article is clearly to signal that the CPSU does not want a definitive split with the PCI. Pravda as much as says so, and the effect of the piece is to return the debate to a more normal and less inquisitorial discussion of inter-party differences, however serious they remain. The theme of the achievements of "real socialism" in the USSR, and the very sore point of the PCI's challenge on this score, is not developed as it had been in the earlier Pravda article. The theme of peace-loving socialism versus aggressive imperialism however retains its central position in the Soviet argument. Poland is not ducked unlike - as Unita has since pointed out - the earlier article, but the PCI's main arguments are inevitably not revealed nor countered with logically argued response. On both issues the Russians try to capture the moral as well as ideological high ground.

why?!

3. The Russians presumably have an eye on internal PCI and Italian politics, although we here are not qualified to judge how real their chances may be of exploiting differences of opinion within the PCI. The latest article could be read as an appeal to any elements in the PCI unhappy with the January Plenum documents or at least to encourage those sections of the party more favourably disposed to the Russians to be on reflexion concerned about the effect of the January decisions on the International Communist movement. An Italian Embassy colleague has a Machiavelian theory that the CPSU had been tipped off by the PCI in advance of those decisions, and that it had been explained that the Italian party had to criticise the Soviet Union with an eye to eventual Italian elections and maybe PCI involvement in an Italian Government. That did not mean the differences between the two parties were not real, but the Russian position might be to see how the Italians get on in the next elections. If the PCI failed then they would have to return cap in hand to the fold, perhaps under new leadership. That also poses the hypothetical question of how the Russians would view PCI involvement in government. They have had mixed feelings about PCI minority participation in Mitterand's government in France but the strength of the Italian party and the role it might play would presumably be very different.



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4. Meanwhile a Soviet aim must continue to be to quarantine the PCI so that other Communist parties do not become infected with its unacceptable views, and to reassert Soviet prestige in the international movement. As I am reporting separately that would seem to underly the Soviet attitude to the recent PCF congress and Chernenko's speech during it.

Your ever,

Amur

S D M Jack

cc: Chancery Rome
UKDEL NATO
Washington
Paris
Bonn

Printings between the PCI and Moscow over Poland was inevitable following PCI support for the early moves of Solidarity. This surfaced, for example, in a critically Soviet comment in New Times in June 1981, over an article in the PCI journal, Biscaglia, which had spoken of a threat to Poland and interference in her internal affairs, exemplified in the 5 June Soviet letter to the Polish leadership. The imposition of martial law on 13 December, while not as disastrous as a Soviet-led invasion would have been, posed the same basic dilemma for the PCI as Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968 and to a lesser extent Afghanistan in 1980. However, given the record of the PCI under the reformists, condemnation of martial law came as no surprise. A PCI Direzione statement on 13 December condemned the emergency measures, called for civil and trade union rights to be respected, and spoke of the need to avoid external pressure. The statement made no explicit reference to Soviet interference or responsibility. After a period of political maneuvering in which the