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TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELNO 621 OF 25 JUN 85

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INFO ROUTINE WASHINGTON, LISBON, MADRID, EC POSTS.

MYTELNO 617: NEW ITALIAN PRESIDENT

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SUMMARY

1. COSSIGA, THE NEW ITALIAN PRESIDENT ELECTED YESTERDAY, WILL BRING A DIFFERENT STYLE TO THE POST. HIS SMOOTH ELECTION IS A CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS FOR THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (DC) AND DE MITA BUT ALSO THE PRODUCT OF UNIQUE POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES. CRAXI'S OWN POSITION LIKELY TO REMAIN UNCHANGED. COSSIGA SHOULD BE A GOOD FRIEND TO BRITAIN.

DETAIL

2. SENATOR FRANCESCO COSSIGA WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC YESTERDAY AFTERNOON IN THE FIRST BALLOT, THE FIRST TIME THIS HAS HAPPENED SINCE 1946. HIS 752 VOTES OUT OF 977 (674 WAS THE MAJORITY NEEDED) REFLECTED THE AGREEMENT REACHED OVER THE WEEKEND BY ALL THE MAJOR PARTIES (EXCEPT THE EXTREME RIGHT) TO SUPPORT HIS CANDIDATURE. THE QUICK RESULT HAS BEEN WIDELY WELCOMED, SINCE A PROTRACTED SERIES OF BALLOTS WOULD HAVE BEEN POLITICALLY DIVISIVE AND THE OUTCOME UNCERTAIN. COSSIGA WILL ENTER HIS SEVEN YEAR PRESIDENTIAL TERM (ON 9 JULY, UNLESS - AS THERE ARE NOW HINTS-PERTINI DECIDES TO STEP DOWN PREMATURELY) WITH THE ALMOST UNANIMOUS SUPPORT OF ALL ITALIAN POLITICAL GROUPS.

3. PERTINI HAS PUT HIS OWN STAMP ON THE PRESIDENCY, REINFORCING HIS POSITION AS A UNIFYING FORCE ABOVE THE POLITICAL PARTIES, AND AS A FOCAL POINT OF NATIONAL UNITY AND SELF-RESPECT. THIS MARKED SUCCESS WILL MAKE HIS PRESIDENCY DIFFICULT TO FOLLOW. BUT ADMIRABLE THOUGH PERTINI HAS BEEN, HE HAS FALLEN SLIGHTLY IN ESTEEM IN RECENT MONTHS AFTER A NUMBER OF ACTS OF APPARENT POLITICAL MISJUDGEMENT. MANY ITALIANS MAY NOW PREFER A QUIETER MORE DIGNIFIED AND LESS EMOTIONAL PRESIDENT. COSSIGA'S PERSONAL STYLE SHOULD BE OF THAT KIND. HE HAS A REPUTATION FOR INTEGRITY, HAVING RESIGNED IN MAY 1978 AS MINISTER OF INTERIOR FOLLOWING MORO'S KILLING, AND AGAIN IN 1980 AFTER THE DEFEAT OF HIS SECOND GOVERNMENT - SHOWING SCRUPLES FOR WHICH MOST ITALIAN POLITICIANS ARE NOT NOTED. HE HAS BEEN AN EFFECTIVE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, PUTTING HIMSELF ABOVE PARTY INFIGHTING, BUT PREPARED TO INTERVENE FORCEFULLY IN DEFENCE OF POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS:

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FOR EXAMPLE, IN HIS STRONG CRITICISM OF CRAXI'S GOVERNMENT EARLIER THIS YEAR FOR TOO FREQUENT LEGISLATION BY EMERGENCY DECREE RATHER THAN ORDINARY BILLS. THE PRESIDENT'S POWERS ARE NOT ENTIRELY SYMBOLIC, SINCE HE DECIDES WHOM TO ASK TO TRY TO FORM A GOVERNMENT. BUT I WOULD EXPECT COSSIGA TO USE HIS POSITION QUIETLY AND UNCONTROVERSIALLY.

4. COSSIGA'S SMOOTH ELECTION IS A SUCCESS FOR THE DC, WHO HAVE LONG SOUGHT TO REGAIN THEIR TRADITIONAL HOLD ON AT LEAST ONE OF THE TWO MAJOR OFFICES OF STATE. IT IS ALSO A PERSONAL TRIUMPH FOR DE MITA, THE PARTY SECRETARY, TO HAVE PERSUADED HIS PARTY TO SINK ITS JEALOUSIES IN SUPPORT OF A COMMON CANDIDATE. IN THE PAST THE DIFFERENT FACTIONS WITHIN THE DC HAVE FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO AGREE ON A CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY, EVEN FROM WITHIN THEIR OWN PARTY, AND THE DC VOTE HAS GENERALLY BEEN SPLIT. THIS TIME MUCH IS OWED TO SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES. THE DC HAD TO STAND TOGETHER TO MAKE SURE OF GETTING THEIR CANDIDATE INTO THE QUIRINALE SINCE IT WAS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT IF COSSIGA HAD NOT BEEN ELECTED EARLY ON THE ELECTION WOULD HAVE BEEN THROWN DANGEROUSLY WIDE OPEN. ALSO COSSIGA'S PRINCIPAL DC RIVALS (FORLANI, ANDREOTTI AND FANFANI) ALL URGED THEIR FOLLOWING TO VOTE FOR COSSIGA. FANFANI MAY BE REWARDED WITH THE PRESIDENCY OF THE SENATE, A POST HE HAS HELD BEFORE.

5. THE COMMUNISTS (PCI) AND SOCIALISTS (PSI) ALSO HAD STRONG INTERESTS, FOR DIFFERENT REASONS, IN SUPPORTING A COMMON CANDIDATE. THE PCI HAVE BEEN WEAKENED THIS YEAR BY THEIR PERFORMANCE IN THE MAY ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS AND IN THE 9 JUNE REFERENDUM ON PAY POLICY. THEY WERE NOT IN A STRONG POSITION TO OPPOSE A COMMON CANDIDATE, AND THEY WILL NOW WANT TO GAIN POLITICAL CREDIT FROM ARGUING (RIGHTLY) THAT THEIR SUPPORT WAS NECESSARY FOR COSSIGA'S ELECTION. THE SOCIALISTS WOULD HAVE PREFERRED FORLANI BUT WILL BE HOPEING THAT AS A RESULT OF THEIR SUPPORT CRAXI'S POSITION AS PRIME MINISTER WILL BE GUARANTEED THE THE DC FOR THE TIME BEING.

6. CRAXI HOPES THAT THE DC, HAVING OBTAINED THE PRESIDENCY, WILL ALLOW HIM TO CONTINUE IN OFFICE. THE PSI TRIED TO NEGOTIATE SUCH AN UNDERTAKING LAST WEEK BUT THE DC CLAIM TO HAVE GIVEN NONE. THEY WANT THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP BACK NEXT BUT THAT IS A DIFFERENT STORY AND THEY WOULD BE UNWISE TO MAKE THE ATTEMPT. THE NEXT MOVE WILL BE FOR CRAXI TO RE-SHUFFLE HIS CABINET. PROBABLY IN JULY. IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT A NUMBER OF PORTFOLIOS WILL CHANGE HANDS AND THAT FRESH BLOOD WILL BE BROUGHT IN. THEREAFTER CRAXI HOPES, NOT UNREASONABLY, FOR A FURTHER PERIOD IN OFFICE, AND TO BREAK LOCAL RECORDS IN THAT RESPECT.

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7. COSSIGA HAS BEEN A GOOD FRIEND OF BRITAIN AND HIS ATTITUDE TO US HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY WARM AND CORDIAL. HE WAS PRIME MINISTER WHEN HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN PAID A STATE VISIT TO ITALY IN OCTOBER 1980. HE TOOK A KEEN INTEREST, AND PLAYED A MAJOR PART, IN THE VISIT OF THE PRINCE AND PRINCESS OF WALES EARLIER THIS YEAR. HE IS A STRONG ADMIRER OF THE PRIME MINISTER. WE SHOULD BUILD ON THIS. THE LAST STATE VISIT TO BRITAIN BY AN ITALIAN PRESIDENT WAS SARAGAT'S IN 1969. I HOPE WE CAN CONSIDER INVITING COSSIGA TO PAY A STATE VISIT AT SOME POINT DURING HIS SEVEN YEAR TERM OF OFFICE.

BRIDGES

EUROPEAN POLITICAL

WED

MR DERER THOMAS

MR JENKINS

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FM FCO 242042Z JUN 85
TO IMMEDIATE ROME
TELEGRAM NUMBER 316 OF 24 JUNE

ELECTION OF FRANCESCO COSSIGA AS PRESIDENT OF ITALY

GRATEFUL IF YOU WOULD TRANSMIT THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE TO
MR. COSSIGA FROM THE PRIME MINISTER.

IT IS WITH THE GREATEST PLEASURE THAT I HAVE JUST LEARNT OF
YOUR ELECTION AS PRESIDENT OF THE ITALIAN REPUBLIC. I KNOW THAT
THE FRIENDSHIP OF THE BRITISH AND ITALIAN PEOPLES WILL BE STILL
FURTHER STRENGTHENED BY YOUR ASSUMPTION OF YOUR HIGH OFFICE. IN
CONVEYING THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT'S CONGRATULATIONS, I ADD MY
WARMEST PERSONAL CONGRATULATIONS AND GOOD WISHES TO AN OLD AND
TRUE FRIEND.

HOWE

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CONFIDENTIAL

25 June 1985

ELECTION OF NEW ITALIAN PRESIDENT

Thank you for your letter of 24 June enclosing a draft message of congratulations to Signor Cossiga.

I passed an amended version to the resident clerk last night for despatch. I enclose a copy.

(C. D. POWELL)

C. R. Budd, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

ELECTION OF FRANCESCO COSSIGA AS PRESIDENT OF ITALY

Grateful if you would transmit the following message to Mr. Cossiga from the Prime Minister.

It is with the greatest pleasure that I have just learnt of your election as President of the Italian Republic. I know that the friendship of the British and Italian peoples will be still further strengthened by your assumption of your high office. In conveying the British Government's congratulations, I add my warmest personal congratulations and good wishes to an old and true friend.

(B)

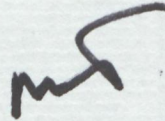
E.R.

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cc PC



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

24 June, 1985

Dear Charles,

Election of New Italian President: On. Francesco Cossiga

Lord Bridges has reported that earlier today Cossiga was elected President of Italy, in succession to President Pertini, whose seven year term expires on 8 July.

Cossiga's election in the first ballot is almost unprecedented. He is as you know an anglophile and a warm admirer of the Prime Minister, whom he last met in London in August 1984 during a private visit. He was himself Prime Minister during Her Majesty's State Visit in October 1980. I enclose a personality note.

Sir Geoffrey Howe recommends that the Prime Minister should send a message of congratulations. I enclose a draft.

Yours ever,

Colin Budd

(C R Budd)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

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OUT TELEGRAM

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FM FCO JUNE 85

TO IMMEDIATE ROME

TELEGRAM NUMBER

ELECTION OF FRANCESCO COSSIGA AS PRESIDENT OF ITALY

1. Grateful if you would transmit the following message to Cossiga from the Prime Minister:

BEGINS

I have just learnt of your election as President of the Italian Republic. I should like to convey to you my own warmest congratulations and those of the British Government. I am confident that the bonds of friendship which link the British and Italian peoples will be strengthened further during your term of office.

Margaret Thatcher

ENDS

HOWE

NNNN

with the greatest pleasure

personal as well as

know that the

will make

on your assumption of your high office.

In conveying to British Genet's add my warmest personal congratulations & good wishes to an old & true friend.

In is with the greatest pleasure

NNNN ends telegram	BLANK	Catchword
File number	Dept Private Office	Distribution
Drafted by (Block capitals) COLIN BUDD		European Political WED PD News D PS PS/Lady Young Mr Jenkins
Telephone number		
Authorised for despatch		Copy to No 10 Downing Street
Comcen reference	Time of despatch	

COSSIGA, ONOREVOLE FRANCESCO

President of the Senate (Christian Democrat).

Born Sassari (Sardinia) 1928. Professor of constitutional law at the University of Sassari. Deputy for Cagliari since 1958. DC Provincial Secretary 1956-58. Member of the DC National Council since 1958. Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Defence in three successive governments from February 1966 to July 1969. Minister without Portfolio responsible for Public Administration in Moro's fourth government, 1974-76. Minister of the Interior in Moro's fifth government (January-August 1976).

It was as Minister of the Interior that Cossiga first caught the public eye. His handling of the Friuli earthquake relief operations, and television appearances at that time, enhanced his own reputation for efficiency and contributed to his party's success in the June 1976 election. Andreotti kept him on when he formed his single-party DC government in August 1976, as a Minister with a proven ability to get things done. He is a member of the leftish "Base" faction of the DC. Despite some criticism (mainly from the right-wing of his own party) of his handling of law and order he was reappointed in Andreotti's fourth government in March 1978. He resigned in May 1978, shortly after Moro's body was found, taking Ministerial responsibility for the failure of the security forces to come to grips with the Moro kidnapping. After others had failed, he succeeded in forming a second Government, including the PSI, in April 1980. But PCI opposition to the DC at this time was severe and Cossiga also had to cope with damaging scandals within his own party, including one concerning the terrorist son of Donat Cattin which touched Cossiga personally and hurt his Sardinian pride. In September the Government was defeated over its economic package and Cossiga, characteristically, resigned on principle rather than continue the struggle. He was not a tough or inspiring leader but his integrity and ability were much admired even by his political adversaries. He remained a Deputy but took life quietly from 1980-83. In 1983 he entered the Senate and was elected President of the Senate for the 9th Legislature. He therefore ranks second only to President Pertini in protocol terms.

He is exceptionally friendly, and gives an impression of down-to-earth competence unusual in a DC politician. Considerable knowledge of constitutional history, including English, and military uniforms. He is much interested in Cardinal Newman's life and work. Also a radio amateur.

Visited England in 1976 as the guest of Mr Roy Jenkins (then Home Secretary) and again in 1977 as the guest of Mr Merlyn Rees (whom he took great trouble to entertain personally during the return visit to Rome). He also met Mrs Thatcher. A sincere Anglophile: his role in solving the EC budget problem during the Italian Presidency in the first half of 1980 was of critical importance. He called on the Prime Minister during a private visit to London in August 1984.

Cossiga is married, with one son and one daughter, whom he sent to England to study. He was related to the former PCI Party Secretary, Berlinguer, who died in 1984. Speaks some English and French. His fall in 1980 embittered him for some time. The present job, prestigious but not stressful, suits him. He has been tipped as one of the DC's candidates for the Presidency when Pertini goes.

Awarded an Honorary GCMG during the 1980 State Visit.