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TELELETTER

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TELELETTER

FROM S J GOMERSALL WASHINGTON

NFR

DATED 12 AUGUST 1983

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FOLLOWING FOR R P OSBORNE ESC ~~SECRET~~ FCO
CHANCERY ~~ROME~~ UKDEL NATO BOMB PARIS

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NEW ITALIAN GOVERNMENT : US REACTIONS

1. I DISCUSSED THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION WITH BOB GELBARD, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR WEST EUROPEAN AFFAIRS IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT, ON 12 AUGUST, ON THE BASIS OF ROME TELNOS 366 AND 374. THE STATE DEPARTMENT DID NOT BELIEVE THAT, BORADLY SPEAKING, AMERICAN OR WESTERN INTERESTS WOULD BE AFFECTED BY THE NEW GOVERNMENT. CRAXI HIMSELF, HAVING CONCENTRATED SO FAR PRIMARILY ON DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, WAS NOT YET AT HOME WITH THE INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, AND IN RECENT WEEKS HAD SAID SOME THINGS ON NATO AND INF WHICH SHOWED A LACK OF UNDERSTANDING AND A POSSIBLE DISPOSITION TO ARGUE FOR COMPROMISES ON DEPLOYMENT. HOWEVER, SINCE THE FORMATION OF THE CRAXI GOVERNMENT, THE AMERICANS HAD HAD DIRECT CONTACT WITH ANDREOTTI AND WITH SPADOLINI, AS WELL AS OTHERS VERY CLOSE TO CRAXI HIMSELF, AND HAD RECEIVED PERFECTLY SATISFACTORY ASSURANCES ABOUT THE ITALIAN POSITION ON INF DEPLOYMENT.

2. NATURALLY, THE AMERICANS GREATLY REGRET THE DEPARTURE OF COLOMBO, WHO HAD VERY CLOSE RELATIONS WITH BOTH HAIG AND SHULTZ. GELBARD ADMITTED THEY HAD RESERVATIONS ABOUT ANDREOTTI, NOT SO MUCH RELATED TO HIS GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY - A PHASE OF THE LATE 70S WHICH THEY BELIEVED HAD PASSED- BUT BECAUSE OF HIS VIEWS ON THE MIDDLE EAST. GELBARD RECALLED THAT IT WAS

HE WHO INVITED ARAFAT TO ROME, AS A RESULT OF WHICH ARAFAT WAS RECEIVED BY THE POPE. THEIR AMBASSADOR'S CONVERSATION WITH ANDREOTTI HAD HOWEVER THROWN UP NO PROBLEMS ON LEADING INTERNATIONAL ISSUES. ON CENTRAL AMERICA, THE SOURCE OF CRITICISM OF US POLICY IF ANY, WAS LIKELY TO BE THE SOCIALIST PARTY, BUT THEIR LEADERS AT, FOR EXAMPLE, THE SOCIALIST INTERNATIONAL, HAD BEEN QUITE RESTRAINED, AND THE SOCIALISTS IN THE CRAXI CABINET DID NOT HAVE INFLUENCE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

3. WHILE AGREEING THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS A STRONG ONE AND THAT THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS WOULD NOT BE IN A POSITION FOR SOME WHILE TO MOUNT A COUNTER TO CRAXI, GELBARD THOUGHT THAT OTHER FACTORS WOULD ALSO DETERMINE THE LONGEVITY OF THIS CABINET, INCLUDING THE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AMONG SO MANY SENIOR POLITICIANS, THEIR WILLINGNESS TO CONTAIN THEIR DIFFERENCES IN ORDER TO STAY IN POWER, AND THE ECONOMY.

4. CRAXI HAD BEEN PRESSING FOR A VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES LONG BEFORE HIS ELECTION AS PRIME MINISTER. IT IS VERY LIKELY THAT HE WILL NOW VISIT WASHINGTON FOR TALKS WITH PRESIDENT REAGAN IN THE AUTUMN.

SIGNED S J GOMERSALL