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GRS 500

FM ROME 111530Z OCT 84

TO IMMEDIATE FCO TELNO 687

OF 11 OCTOBER 1984

AND INFO PRIORITY PARIS, UKMIS NEW YORK.

AND INFO ROUTINE OTHER EC POSTS, UKDEL STRASBOURG.

Likely to be a
difficult issue at the
Anglo-Italian summit
next week.
CDP
12/X.

YOUR TELS NOS 320 AND 325 TO ATHENS: FALKLANDS AT THE UN

1. I SAW THE POLITICAL DIRECTOR THIS MORNING, TO CARRY OUT YOUR GENERAL LOBBYING INSTRUCTIONS, AND TO GO OVER THE SUBJECT WITH HIM IN PREPARATION FOR THE VISIT BY CRAXI AND ANDREOTTI TO LONDON NEXT WEEK.

2. I TOLD BOTTAI THAT WE HAD KEPT THE MFA FULLY INFORMED OF OUR VIEWS IN RECENT WEEKS, BUT I THOUGHT IT USEFUL TO DISCUSS THIS MATTER WITH HIM PERSONALLY SINCE IT WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY COME UP AT THE ANGLO/ITALIAN SUMMIT. THERE SHOULD BE NO QUESTION IN THE MINDS OF ITALIAN MINISTERS THAT THIS REMAINED A VERY IMPORTANT ISSUE FOR THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, WHO WOULD BE LOOKING FOR A CONTINUED ABSTENTION BY OUR EC PARTNERS ON THE ARGENTINE DRAFT RESOLUTION THIS YEAR. I GAVE HIM A PAPER SETTING OUT OUR VIEWS FULLY, SO THAT THIS COULD BE AVAILABLE TO THE ITALIAN MINISTERS AS THEY PREPARED FOR THEIR TALKS IN LONDON. THIS DREW ON YOUR FIRST TUR AND TOOK ACCOUNT OF SUBSEQUENT DEVELOPMENTS, INCLUDING YOUR TELNO 357 TO ME, AN ACCOUNT OF WHICH CONVERSATION BOTTAI HAD RECENTLY READ. I ADDED THAT ALTHOUGH THERE WERE RUMOURS OF A REVISED ARGENTINE RESOLUTION, IT DID NOT APPEAR TO BE CONFIRMED THAT ARGENTINA HAD YET CIRCULATED A FRESH TEXT. BUT WHATEVER FORM THIS MIGHT TAKE, WE HELD FIRMLY TO OUR VIEW THAT ANY NEGOTIATIONS ABOUT SOVEREIGNTY WERE OUT OF THE QUESTION, AND THAT THE PRACTICAL IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS WAS THE ONLY REALISTIC POLICY FOR ARGENTINA TO FOLLOW. THE LINE TAKEN BY ALFONSIN IN HIS GENERAL ASSEMBLY SPEECH HAD BEEN VERY DISAPPOINTING: WE HAD HOPED FOR MORE FROM THE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT OF ARGENTINA.

3. BOTTAI SAID THAT CAPUTO HAD TOLD ANDREOTTI TWO WEEKS AGO OF HIS INTENTION TO PRODUCE A FRESH ARGENTINE DRAFT, BUT THIS HAD NOT YET REACHED THE ITALIANS. HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT THE ARGENTINIANS HAD IN MIND, BUT ITALY HAD DELIBERATELY NOT BEEN ACTIVE IN DISCUSSING THE QUESTION WITH THEM. HE HOPED THAT IF A FRESH ARGENTINE DRAFT DID EMERGE, IT WOULD NOT PRESENT THE EC WITH PROBLEMS. THE EARLIER VERSION HAD BEEN A MUCH EASIER TEXT FOR THE COMMUNITY TO HANDLE, AND SAID THAT HE HAD AGREED WITH ANDREANI (WHOM HE HAD SEEN IN NEW YORK) THAT THE EXISTING

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ARGENTINE DRAFT WOULD MORE READILY ALLOW THE EC PARTNERS TO MAINTAIN THEIR ABSTENTION FROM THE VOTE. BUT BOTTAI SAID HE HAD TO POINT OUT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ITALIAN AND BRITISH VIEWS. THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT WAS IN FAVOUR OF THE STATUS QUO ANTE BELLUM, BY WHICH HE SEEMED TO MEAN CONTINUED NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN OURSELVES AND ARGENTINA (AND PRESUMABLY NOT EXCLUDING SOVEREIGNTY). IF THE ARGENTINIANS PRODUCED A NETURAL TEXT SIMPLY CALLING FOR NEGOTATIONS, ITALY WOULD HAVE TO VOTE FOR THAT. FAILURE TO DO SO COULD CAUSE THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT TO FALL, SINCE IT WOULD BE INCOMPREHENSIBLE FOR ITALY NOT TO VOTE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS CONSCIENCE AND DECLARED POLICY.

4. I QUESTIONED THIS VIEW. DID HE REALLY BELIEVE THAT A CONTINUED ABSTENTION WOULD CAUSE SO GRAVE A DOMESTIC PROBLEM?. (ALTHOUGH I DID NOT SAY SO, IT STRUCK ME AS UNLIKELY THAT THIS WOULD HAPPEN, WITH ITALY IN SUPPORT OF AN EC POSITION, UNLESS THE FOREIGN MINISTER WAS ALREADY IN TROUBLE FOR OTHER REASONS). BOTTAI SAID THAT IT WOULD AT LEAST BE AN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT MATTER FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO HANDLE IN PARLIAMENT. SO I THEN SUGGESTED THAT FOR ITALY TO CHANGE HER LINE THIS YEAR COULD CAUSE HIS MINISTER A PUBLIC ROW IN ITALIAN RELATIONS WITH BRITAIN. I DID NOT WANT TO SEE THAT HAPPEN, NOR DID I SUPPOSE THAT MINISTER ANDREOTTI, AFTER HIS RECENT DIFFICULTIES, WOULD WISH TO SEE AN OPEN ARGUMENT WITH THE BRITISH SIMILAR TO THAT HE HAD RECENTLY HAD WITH GERMANY.

5. BOTTAI ENDED THE DISCUSSION BY SAYING THAT IT WAS RIGHT TO DRAW ATTENTION TO THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DISCUSSION IN LONDON NEXT WEEK ON THIS POINT. HE TOO RECALLED THE DIFFERENCE WHICH HAD ARISEN BETWEEN BRITISH AND ITALIAN MINISTERS IN SEPTEMBER 1983, DURING CRAXI'S FIRST VISIT TO LONDON, AND WISHED TO AVOID ANOTHER DISCUSSION OF THAT KIND. HE HOPED ARGENTINA WOULD NOT PRODUCE A NEUTRAL RESOLUTION OF THE SORT LIKELY TO CAUSE MAXIMUM DIFFICULTY. HE MENTIONED THAT ALFONSIN WOULD BE PAYING A VISIT TO EUROPE AFTER THE LONDON DISCUSSIONS, APPARENTLY CALLING AT PARIS, ROME, AND STRASBOURG WHERE HE WAS DUE TO DELIVER A SPEECH. THE ITALIANS EVIDENTLY HOPE THAT A DECISION ABOUT THE VOTE IN THE UN WILL NOT NEED TO BE TAKEN UNTIL THE LAST WEEK IN OCTOBER AT THE EARLIEST.

BRIDGES

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