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TO IMMEDIATE FCO  
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INFO SAVING TO WASHINGTON, UKDELNATO, UKREP BRUSSELS AND OTHER EEC POSTS.

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MY TELNO 135: ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION

1. ANDREOTTI'S SHORT-LIVED 3-PARTY GOVERNMENT WAS DEFEATED IN THE SENATE ON 31 MARCH WITHOUT THE NEED FOR A FURTHER DEBATE IN THE LOWER HOUSE. ANDREOTTI DULY HANDED IN HIS RESIGNATION THE SAME DAY, AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, AFTER CONSULTING THE PRESIDENTS OF THE TWO CHAMBERS AS LAID DOWN BY THE CONSTITUTION, FORMALLY DISSOLVED PARLIAMENT ON 2 APRIL HAVING INVITED ANDREOTTI TO CONTINUE AS CARETAKER UNTIL NEW ELECTIONS. THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS IS EXPECTED TO MEET TOMORROW (4 APRIL) TO DECIDE THE DATE OF THE ELECTIONS, WHICH MUST TAKE PLACE WITHIN 70 DAYS.

IT IS STILL EXPECTED THAT THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS WILL BE COUPLED WITH THOSE FOR THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON 10 JUNE.

2. ALTHOUGH EVENTS HAVE THUS FOLLOWED THE SEQUENCE FORECAST IN MY TUR, THERE WERE DOUBTS UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE ABOUT THE PARLIAMENTARY VOTE.

THE MOTION OF CONFIDENCE IN THE SENATE WAS LOST BY ONLY ONE VOTE, AND COULD EASILY HAVE GONE THE OTHER WAY HAD NOT THE RIGHT WING NATIONAL DEMOCRATS SPLIT FORCES AFTER ANDREOTTI HAD ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD NOT ACCEPT THEIR SUPPORT.

THE VOTING WAS 149 IN FAVOUR (CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, REPUBLICANS AND 4 NATIONAL DEMOCRATS), 150 AGAINST (COMMUNISTS, SOCIALISTS, INDEPENDENT LEFT, NEO FASCISTS AND 1 NATIONAL DEMOCRAT) WITH 22 EITHER ABSENT OR ABSTAINING (INCLUDING THE "MIXED GROUP" AND 4 NATIONAL DEMOCRATS).

THE TONE OF THE DEBATE WAS LOW KEY, AND INDEED THE GENERAL ASSUMPTION IS THAT ANDREOTTI WAS HOPING TO BE DEFEATED DESPITE HIS DENIALS OF TRYING TO PROVOKE EARLY ELECTIONS. HIS STATEMENT BEFORE THE VOTE, IN WHICH HE SAID THAT THROUGHOUT THE CRISIS HE HAD SOUGHT, AND WAS STILL SEEKING, ONLY THE SUPPORT OF THE PARTIES OF THE FORMER MAJORITY (IE INCLUDING THE COMMUNISTS), HAS PROVOKED A SHARP REACTION FROM THOSE ON THE RIGHT WING OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT PARTY WHO FOR SOME TIME HAVE BEEN LOOKING FOR OPPORTUNITIES TO SNIPE AT HIM.

3. SIMILARLY THE DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT WAS BY NO MEANS A FOREGONE CONCLUSION. THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, FANFANI, IS SAID TO HAVE ADVISED PRESIDENT PERTINI AGAINST IT AND IN FAVOUR OF A PAUSE FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH LEADERS OF ALL PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS TO SEE WHETHER ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS COULD STILL BE FOUND. THE SOCIALIST PARTY SECRETARY CRAXI WAS UNTIL THE LAST MOMENT CANVASSING THE IDEA OF GIVING A MANDATE TO SOME OTHER POLITICAL FIGURE. BUT PERTINI, WHO HAS PLAYED A DECISIVE ROLE THROUGHOUT THIS CRISIS, WAS EVIDENTLY UNWILLING TO ACCEPT ANY FURTHER DELAY.

THUS FOR ONLY THE THIRD TIME IN POST-WAR ITALIAN HISTORY (THE OTHER TWO OCCASIONS WERE IN 1972 AND 1976) ITALY IS TO HAVE EARLY ELECTIONS BEFORE THE END OF THE FIVE-YEAR LEGISLATURE.

4. ANDREOTTI WILL GO INTO THE ELECTIONS WITH THE ADVANTAGE (REGARDED AS CONSIDERABLE IN ITALIAN POLITICAL TERMS) THAT HE IS THE SITTING CARETAKER PRIME MINISTER. THIS COULD POSSIBLY HAVE AN INFLUENCE ON THE SHAPE OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT AFTER THE ELECTIONS. IT IS WORTH RECALLING THAT HIS FIRST GOVERNMENT (IN FEBRUARY 1972) ALSO FAILED TO OBTAIN AN INITIAL VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN PARLIAMENT, BUT THAT AFTER EARLY ELECTIONS WITH HIMSELF AS CARETAKER, HE SUCCEEDED IN FORMING A SECOND GOVERNMENT WHICH LASTED FOR OVER A YEAR.

*per Italy internal  
Ply  
4/10*

5. THE COMMUNISTS MEANWHILE, AT THEIR PARTY CONGRESS FROM 30 MARCH TO 3 APRIL, HAVE FALLEN IN PREDICTABLY BEHIND BERLINGUER'S RALLYING CALL OF "EITHER GOVERNMENT OR OPPOSITION". THIS WILL PROBABLY STRENGTHEN BERLINGUER'S PERSONAL POSITION IN THE PARTY. BUT MOST PEOPLE STILL THINK THAT THE COMMUNISTS WILL DROP BACK A FEW POINTS IN A GENERAL ELECTION.

6. FCO PLEASE PASS SAVING ADDRESSEES.

CAMPBELL

[REPEATED AS REQUESTED]

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