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VISIT BY THE ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER

28 MAY 1980

THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION

1. Signor Cossiga was sworn in on 4 April on reappointment as Prime Minister, at the head of a new coalition Government which includes the Socialists. He had resigned in mid-March rather than face defeat on a key vote but was given a mandate by President Pertini to form a new Government. Within 16 days - a record by recent Italian standards - Cossiga succeeded in forming a 3-part coalition made up of 16 Christian Democrats, 9 Socialists and 3 Republicans. By bringing in the Socialists, Cossiga succeeded in forming a Government which has a majority in Parliament without outside support, for the first time since 1974. This has strengthened Cossiga's personal position.

2. It is too early to assess the performance of the new Government. The inclusion of Socialists and Republicans in place of Social Democrats and Liberals in Cossiga's new Government might be expected to produce a more leftward-looking Government. On the other hand, the new coalition is effectively an anti-Communist alliance which has been made possible by recent strengthening in the position of the right wing in both the Christian Democrat Party and the Socialist Party. This trend is apparent in the composition of the Government: members of the centre and right factions predominate among the Christian Democrat Ministers, and there is only one left-winger among the 9 Socialists.

3. Political activity is now focussed almost entirely on the Administrative Elections which will be held on 8 June, and in which the Communists are expected to lose further ground. The results will also be important for the Cossiga Government: if the Socialists do badly, left-wing Socialists may press for the party to withdraw from the coalition.

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
27 May 1980

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