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FM ROME 021520Z JUN

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 364 OF 2 JUNE 1980

INFO PRIORITY UKREP BRUSSELS

INFO SAVING OTHER EC POSTS, UKDEL NATO, WASHINGTON AND MILAN

MY TELNO 363: ITALIAN INTERNAL SITUATION

1. THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSION VOTED ON 31 MAY TO DROP PROCEEDINGS AGAINST COSSIGA OVER THE MARCO DONAT CATTIN AFFAIR. HOWEVER, THE MAJORITY BY WHICH THE COMMISSION'S DECISION WAS REACHED (11 VOTES TO 9 CAST ON PARTY LINES) WAS NOT LARGE ENOUGH TO PUT AN END TO THE MATTER, FOR WHICH A FOUR-FIFTHS MAJORITY WOULD HAVE BEEN REQUIRED. IF MORE THAN ONE-THIRD OF THE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT REQUEST IT, COSSIGA WILL NOW HAVE TO FACE AN INVESTIGATION BEFORE BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

2. MEANWHILE DONAT CATTIN HAS, AS EXPECTED, RESIGNED FROM THE VICE-SECRETARYSHIP OF THE PARTY. BUT THIS IS NOT LIKELY TO BE ENOUGH TO DETER THE OPPOSITION AND NOTABLY THE COMMUNISTS, WHO ALONE HAVE ALMOST ONE-THIRD OF THE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT, FROM FORCING A FULL PARLIAMENTARY INVESTIGATION.

3. FEW PEOPLE SERIOUSLY DOUBT COSSIGA'S PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM. BUT WHAT STARTED AS PURELY A FAMILY TRAGEDY FOR DONAT CATTIN IS NOW BEING EXPLOITED BY THE OPPOSITION PARTIES AS A MEANS OF PUTTING THE COSSIGA GOVERNMENT ON TRIAL. PROVIDED THE COALITION PARTIES (CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS, SOCIALISTS AND REPUBLICANS) STICK TOGETHER, AND NO MORE SERIOUSLY INCRIMINATING EVIDENCE TURNS UP, COSSIGA SHOULD BE ABLE TO SURVIVE A PARLIAMENTARY VOTE.

BUT THE LEFT-WING OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY IS ALREADY SAYING THAT THEIR SUPPORT FOR COSSIGA IN THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSION DOES NOT COMMIT THEM IF THE MATTER BECOMES BEFORE PARLIAMENT AS A WHOLE. IN ANY EVENT THE WHIFF OF SCANDAL, HOWEVER ARTIFICIAL, COULD BE DAMAGING TO THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS IN THE LOCAL ELECTIONS ON 8 JUNE.

FCO PLEASE PASS SAVING ADDRESSEES

ARCULUS

[REPEATED AS REQUESTED]

FCO/WHITEHALL DISTN.

WED

[THIS TELEGRAM WAS NOT ADVANCED]

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