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Minister  
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cc: Mr Gladstone, WED

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*Mr Gladstone 8/6*  
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*(Internal Address)*

NOTE OF A CONVERSATION WITH MINISTER COLOMBO ON 29 MAY

1. I saw the Italian Foreign Minister at the Second Pan-European Meeting of National Research Institutions at the Italian National Research Council this morning.
2. Signor Forlani's Visit to London. Minister Colombo said that he had not wanted this to be cancelled and had tried to keep the door open in case Signor Forlani could form another government quickly. This did not look very likely and he supposed therefore it really would not be practicable to go to London on 2/3 June. I said we had received a message from Signor Forlani's office definitely putting it off, and we were acting on the assumption that unfortunately it was deferred. Signor Colombo asked when it would be possible to reinstate the visit and I said I thought that there might be difficulties in finding a mutually convenient date before the summer holiday, so I supposed it might slip to the autumn. He said that he proposed to discuss the matter with Signor Forlani and promised to let me know the outcome.
3. Political situation. I asked Signor Colombo what was the way out. If Craxi would not join a Forlani bis government, and if, as he confirmed, the DC would not tolerate Craxi as Prime Minister at this stage, and if the President did not want to agree to anticipated elections, what was the solution? Could one envisage some other party stepping in, eg Spadolini? Colombo said no. Neither could the DC tolerate Craxi as their Prime Minister because that would look as if they were being punished for corruption and ineptitude and so on. I had the impression from this conversation and from talking to members of President Pertini's entourage that Forlani was in considerable difficulties.
4. On the P2 affair, Signor Colombo said there were three questions to be gone into:
  - (a) was the P2 compatible with the Constitution;
  - (b) was membership of the P2 by officials and politicians etc compatible with their duties; and
  - (c) what, if any, crimes had those named in the published lists of so-called members of the P2 committed?

He said that question (a) could be answered quite quickly. Question (b) was not so simple, and question (c) would take a long time. I asked, incidentally, what was the position of Signor Malfatti of the MFA, and he said he remained at his post. His case was different from that of Admiral Torrisi, who as Chief

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of the Defence Staff had responsibility for the Secret Services etc which made it desirable to set him aside for the time being (ie on leave). This did not apply to Malfatti, who could continue to work at the Farnesina, as he is doing.

5. We left it that Minister Colombo would be in touch with me in due course after he has spoken to Signor Forlani.

29 May 1981

*R Arculus*  
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