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INTELLIGENCE REPORT

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COUNTRY Italy/Austria

DATE:

SUBJECT Visit of the SVP Delegation to Rome

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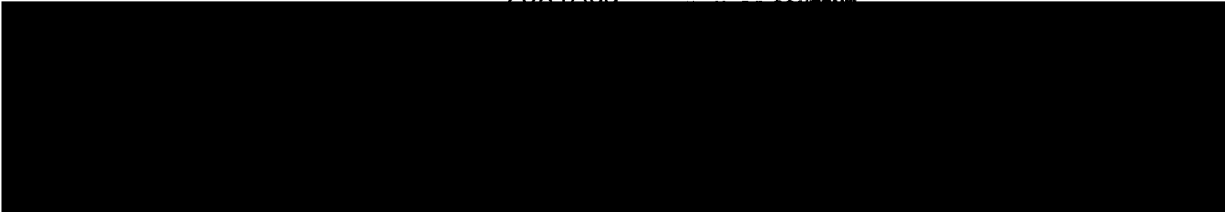
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ORIGIN

SUPPLEMENT

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1. SVP Delegation Visits Rome to Confer with Italian Authorities

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(a) At the invitation of Italian Premier De Gasperi an SVP (South Tirol Volkspartei) Delegation, comprising the President Erich Amonn, the second Deputy President Dr. Friedl Volgger, the Secretary-General Dr. v. Guggenberg, and Dr. Raffener, left for Rome on 15 April, returning to Bolzano on 25 April.

(b) During their stay in Rome the SVP delegates are reported to have had conversations with the following:

- Premier De Gasperi,
- Dr. Innocenti,
- Ivanoe Bonomi, Chairman of the Autonomy Commission,
- Nicolo Carandini, Italian Ambassador in London,
- Giovanni Boeri, adviser to the Italian Government on autonomy questions,
- The Pope,
- Dr. Schwarzenberg, Austrian Charge d'Affaires in Rome.

(c) The conversation with Bonomi was of a strictly confidential nature. De Gasperi told the SVP delegates that it would be better if they did not contact the Bonomi Commission. However, when pressed, he consented to their seeing one member of it, and suggested Bonomi himself, on condition that they kept the meeting secret.

2. General Impression of Visit

Generally speaking the SVP delegates were satisfied with the results of their trip. A surprisingly friendly atmosphere prevailed in Rome, and the Italians showed a certain willingness to recognize the South Tirolese viewpoint. On the other hand, no definite promises were made and the most delicate points of issue were scarcely mentioned. Consequently the delegates are not unduly optimistic. While welcoming the cordiality of the reception accorded them, and the consideration given to their proposals, their innate distrust of the Italians

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keeps them cautious. In particular, they fear that such concessions as the Italians may be prepared to make will be in form rather than substance. They also foresee a hard struggle ahead when details are discussed.

3. Regional versus Provincial Autonomy

- (a) On the basic question of a regional versus provincial autonomy the SVP delegates found that De Gasperi and Innocenti had been approaching this problem from a viewpoint directly opposed to their own. For the Italians, Trentino and South Tirol form one region, and it is merely a question of separating them to the minimum extent required by the Paris Agreement. The South Tirolese on the other hand regard the two provinces as separate entities, and for them the question is to what extent they may safely collaborate in common matters.
- (b) Defending the Italian viewpoint, Innocenti put forward the following thesis. The Paris Agreement may be divided into three parts: the first provides for the minority rights of the South Tirolese, which the Italian Government is in the process of granting and guaranteeing; the third provides for the settlement with Austria of certain problems arising from the South Tirol question which directly affect Austria; sandwiched between the two is the provision for a legislative and executive autonomy, but only as regards those matters referred to in Part I of the Agreement, namely the minority rights. Innocenti asserted that if the Italian Government were prepared to extend the autonomy beyond the minority rights - and he indicated that it was - then the South Tirolese must regard this Italian generosity as "a voluntary gift which might be taken back at any time". On the basis of this thesis Innocenti maintained that the Italian Government had every right to insist on a regional autonomy, provided that the South Tirolese were given special autonomous rights in connection with minority matters (schools, etc.).
- (c) The SVP delegates vigorously countered this thesis, and put forward their own proposals for separate diets in Bolzano and Trento, and a joint diet of the two provinces for certain specified common matters. It was here that the Italians made their apparent concession. De Gasperi welcomed the SVP proposal as "an important step toward a possible solution". Subsequently Innocenti - presumably acting on instruction from De Gasperi - showed interest in the SVP proposals, and began to discuss them in more detail. He finally told the SVP delegates that he was preparing a new draft autonomy statute on the lines of their proposals, and even read them extracts from it. This draft will be submitted to the Bonomi Commission for consideration, and then the SVP and other interested parties (including the Trentiners) will be invited to Rome again to discuss it. This invitation is expected in about three to four weeks. Innocenti incidentally told the SVP delegates that the Costituente hoped to deal with the South Tirol question before discussing the other general autonomy schemes.

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- (d) The SVP delegates are said to believe that, provided no undue pressure is exerted by the Trentiners or any other outside party, there is a reasonable chance that the autonomy statute will be based on their proposals. They fear, however, that when it comes to the vital question of the division of powers between the separate Diets and the joint Diet, the Italians will insist that all the important powers be vested in the joint Diet, with the final result that the autonomy will be provincial in form, but regional in substance.
- (e) This question of the division of powers is for the SVP leaders the crucial one. They point out that in their proposals they have gone as far as they possibly can. They fear that the Italians will put forward counter-proposals of a nature which will place them in the difficult position of either having to reject the Italian draft completely, or of agreeing to accept it as a basis for negotiation which will inevitably lead to a modification in Italy's favor of their final offer.
- (f) The SVP leaders are already discussing what position they should adopt if and when this situation arises. Their former determination is somewhat weakened by (a) the feeling that time is working against them in that it is greatly in their interests to settle the whole South Tirol question before the next Italian elections, and (b) the belief that failure to reach agreement in Moscow on the Austrian Treaty has considerably weakened their main outside support. On the other hand, in their efforts to meet the Italians half way they have already gone beyond their terms as agreed upon by the full Direction of the SVP, and they are doubtful that the South Tirolese as a whole would consent to further concessions.

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~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ Comment: In this connection the Direction of the South Tirolese Association for Returned Prisoners of War, which comprises some 8,000 youths, has just decided that the time is approaching to take a firm stand against the Italians, and that preparations should be made accordingly.)

- (g) For the moment the SVP leaders are merely discussing, without attempting to decide, this issue, realizing that the final decision will depend on a number of unknown factors, such as the attitude of the Austrian Government and the possible measure of outside support from Austria and the Western Powers. A split between the SVP leaders on this issue is not out of the question.
- (h) In the course of their conversations the SVP delegates noticed a marked difference of attitude concerning this question of regional versus provincial autonomy between De Gasperi and Innocenti on the one side, and Carandini, Bonomi and Boeri on the other. The two former were much more insistent on the regional autonomy. De Gasperi stressed the importance of settling the autonomy question immediately, while simultaneously pointing out the internal political difficulties in the way of a settlement. To the SVP delegates it seemed clear that, being himself a Trentiner and for the sake of the Trentiners, he wanted the autonomy question settled while he was still in power, and in such

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a way that it amounts as nearly as possible to a regional autonomy. Innocenti supports him, either as a good official supporting his master or for his own personal reasons. Carandini took an entirely different line. He saw the whole South Tirol question from the European standpoint. To him it is all important for Italy to reach a real understanding with Austria, and he even talked of the Brenner frontier slowly falling away. He seemed to attach little or no importance to the question of regional versus provincial autonomy. For him it is essential that the South Tirolese should be given as soon as possible the full rights assured to them in Paris, so that an obstacle to the desired understanding between Austria and Italy can be removed. Berti followed much the same line, indicating that he did not see "why so much consideration was paid to the Trentiners". He intimated that Bonomi shared his views. Carandini promised to put the South Tirolese case before De Gasperi again. He warned the SVP delegates, however, that the granting to South Tirol of its own and full autonomy would be somewhat of a shock to the average Italian, and that therefore they would be advised to proceed cautiously. The SVP delegates feel that if only Carandini (not Innocenti) were competent in the South Tirol question, they could reach an agreement with the Italians almost immediately.

- (i) Innocenti had made a certain headway in his new draft autonomy statute when the SVP delegates had their final talk with him. This talk did not reassure them, for it showed them that, while he is attempting to follow the SVP proposals in form, he is still thinking in terms of disguised regional autonomy.
- (j) Thus, he talked a great deal about the need for three "juridical bodies" in the region (Trentino, South Tirol and the joint body) and for three governors. He further mentioned the difficulty of a suitable common capital town. The SVP delegates objected to all these proposals as unnecessary. In their opinion there need be only the two juridical bodies of Trentino and South Tirol, with the joint Diet sitting sometimes in Trento, and sometimes in Bolzano to enact legislation for both provinces, which the two executives will enforce in their separate zones.
- (k) Innocenti further foresees a common statute for the "Unione regionale Trentino-Alto Adige". The SVP delegates objected to the Italian name "Alto Adige" and asked for "Südtirol". Innocenti doubted if this were possible, but suggested that the SVP might try to find a member of the Costituente who would put forward the proposal that the name "Südtirol" should be allowed as "a generous Italian gesture". The SVP delegates anticipate no difficulty in finding such a sponsor from among the Saragat group. Simultaneously they hope to enlist the support of Austrian Foreign Minister Dr. Gruber in this question, which they consider of considerable importance, first for its effect on the South Tirolese as a whole, secondly for tourist traffic reasons.
- (l) The Italians further objected to the powers of the Italian State being specifically defined in the autonomy statute, and the other powers being left to the autonomous region. In their view the powers of the autonomous region must be specifically

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defined and the rest left to the Italian State. Among the specific powers of the autonomous region, they would agree to some such vague clause as "such other local matters as clearly fall within the competence of the region".

- (m) Strong opposition came from the Italians to the SVP suggestion that local police should fall within the competence of the autonomous authorities. Considering the daily abuses of the Italian police in South Tirol and their policy of intimidation of the local populace, the SVP leaders feel very strongly on this point, and hope to enlist Gruber's support for it.
- (n) The SVP proposals contain the provision that only those who have been resident in South Tirol for ten years shall be entitled to vote at the first elections of the autonomous parliament. Innocenti considered that ten years was too long and suggested five, which the SVP leaders do not regard as wholly unreasonable. At the same time they point out that if five years is accepted there is danger of excluding from voting all the optants for Germany under the Hitler-Mussolini Agreement, who left South Tirol before 1942. They are consequently advising Gruber that, in settling the optants' question, he must insist upon a clause to the effect that the residence of the optants in Austria or Germany shall not count as absence from South Tirol.

4. The Optants' Question

- (a) Amonn and Raffeiner discussed the optants' question with Innocenti. From this discussion they learned that the Italian Chargé d'Affaires in Vienna, Coppini, was in Rome to confer with Innocenti, and further that the Memorandum of the Austrian Foreign Ministry on the optants' question had finally reached Rome.
- (b) Innocenti stated that the optants' question must also be decided by the Costituente, and not by simple governmental decree as the SVP leaders had assumed. He anticipated no difficulties nor delay here, but the SVP leaders immediately saw the danger of the optants' question not being settled before the Costituente terminated its business at the end of June. In this case it is more than likely that the very considerable number of optants in South Tirol will be deprived of their voting rights, which will mean that the Italians will gain almost an equality with the South Tirolese in South Tirol. To meet this danger, Amonn is particularly anxious that Gruber should proceed immediately with the settlement of this question. Carandini told the SVP delegates that Gruber hopes to meet De Gasperi in June, but Amonn points out that this will be too late.
- (c) The SVP delegates sought to convince Innocenti that sanctions against politically compromised optants in the form of their denationalization were wrong and impracticable. In the first place such a principle ran counter to Article 17 of the new Italian Constitution, which provides that no Italian subject shall lose his nationality for political reasons. Secondly, no State will want to take in the denationalized victims. Thirdly, it would be difficult to find men prepared to serve on the Commission

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which is to pass judgment on these people. Innocenti maintained that Article 17 of the Italian Constitution did not come into it, as the Italians did not consider optants who had received German nationality as Italians. He further stated that the Italians hoped to arrange for the inclusion in the German Treaty of a clause compelling Germany to take in these denationalized persons. The SVP delegates pointed out that there were many optants in South Tirol, who did not even know whether or not they had lost their Italian nationality. In many cases South Tirolese had been struck from the Italian nationality lists without ever being informed. To prevent confusion here the South Tirolese put forward the possibility of making no distinction between those optants who had received German nationality and those who had not. Both categories could be taken together, and both made to give a declaration renouncing their option. In such circumstances the denationalization sanction might be replaced by loss of voting rights for a number of years. It seems that Innocenti was not unimpressed by this suggestion, and the SVP leaders hope that Gruber may be able to obtain its acceptance.

5. The Demokratische Verband Südtirols (DVS)

- (a) Signor Tabarelli of the DVS has also gone down to Rome to present the Italian Authorities with his own autonomy project. The SVP delegates saw him in Rome, and are wondering whether he came on his own initiative, or was invited by the Italians, who may still desire to play him against the SVP. The SVP delegates complained bitterly to Innocenti of the DVS. Innocenti joked about Tabarelli and his colleagues, suggesting that they should not be taken very seriously. The SVP delegates then asked Innocenti if he were aware that it was generally believed in South Tirol that the DVS had been founded on Italian initiative and was financed by the Italians. Innocenti replied that he knew nothing of this, and could scarcely credit it. Then, to the astonishment of the South Tirolese, he is reported to have added: "Perhaps the Ministry of Interior is responsible". The SVP delegates, who have always imagined that Innocenti and Broise are working hand in glove, can only assume that the two must have fallen out over something.
- (b) Incidentally, the SVP leaders have received a report that Secretary-General Wildner of the Austrian Foreign Ministry recently stated that there are two-German-speaking movement in South Tirol, and that he must have statistics as to their relative importance. Nothing is known of any such statements in Innsbruck. Not unnaturally the report has infuriated the SVP leaders, and considerably increased the present mistrust of Vienna.

6. Audience with the Pope

The Austrian Minister to the Vatican arranged a private audience for the SVP delegates with the Pope. When the time came the SVP delegates were surprised to find that they were received in a group audience. They were further mystified when the Pope singled them out for special attention, and repeated three times "a very special blessing for your people". That evening the Osservatore Romano did not include the SVP delegates in its usual list of audiences, although it mentioned all the others received in the same group. The Austrian

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Minister to the Vatican subsequently stated that the whole thing was a mistake on the part of some Vatican official. The SVP delegates are not so certain that the Italian Authorities are not responsible.

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~~Comment:~~ A more likely explanation would seem to be the known caution of the Vatican in the South Tirol question.)

7. Talks with Dr. Schwarzenberg

- (a) The SVP delegates were favorably impressed by the Austrian Charge d'Affaires, Dr. Schwarzenberg, whom they found most helpful, and intelligent in his grasping of the situation. He informed him fully of the results of their various conversations, and particularly of Innocenti's views on the optants' question.
- (b) They found Schwarzenberg a little too awed by Innocenti, and regretted that he refused to engage Hans Schöffel in the Austrian Legation merely because Innocenti was against it.

8. Talks with Private Individuals

- (a) Guggenberg had several talks with an Italian friend of his who knows De Gasperi personally. This friend visited De Gasperi after he had received the SVP delegation, and reported the Italian Premier as stating that he was more convinced than ever that a solution to the South Tirol problem would be found.
- (b) Guggenberg's friend, however, criticized the attitude of the SVP delegation. In his opinion, they should have told De Gasperi that they were ready to assist in the reconstruction of Italy and in bringing about the desired understanding between Italy and Austria; but they had their rights, assured to them in Paris, and if the Italians were not prepared to accept without modification their very conciliatory proposals, then they would refuse all responsibility for what might happen in South Tirol. In short, De Gasperi should be made to reflect on the situation if unrest were to break out in South Tirol.

9. SVP Threat of Possible "Obstruction" Tactics

In their talk with Bonomi, who incidentally impressed them considerably by understanding immediately their point of view, the SVP delegates did hint that if the Italians forced an unfavorable solution on them, the South Tirolese could always adopt the same obstructionist tactics as the Trentiners once employed by refusing to sit in the Tirolese Diet. Innocenti subsequently told the SVP delegates that Bonomi had informed De Gasperi of this, and that the latter horrified at the possibility had reacted most violently. Innocenti expressed his opinion that such obstructionist tactics were a matter for the police. Amonn countered that this might be so in an ordinary Italian province in the middle of Italy, but it was not possible in South Tirol, whose special position and rights were internationally recognized. To this Innocenti did not reply.

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10. Dr. Raffeiner and Dr. Tinzl

- (a) There was almost complete harmony between the various members of the SVP delegation. Guggenberg, however, never felt at ease with Dr. Raffeiner, who made several very tactless remarks in the course of the various conversations. With the possibility in mind of replacing Raffeiner by Dr. Tinzl on the next visit to Rome, he asked Innocenti for his views on Tinzl. Innocenti replied that he had nothing personally against Tinzl, but that "his time has not yet come". He was for the moment opposed to his being included on an SVP official delegation.
- (b) On the other hand Amonn showed his usual exaggerated confidence in Raffeiner, and has even suggested that the latter should return to Rome and stay there as the SVP official representative until the autonomy question has been settled.
- (c) Guggenberg warns that any such step may well revive the old split in the SVP, as Raffeiner remains as unpopular as ever, and in wide circles fears are still expressed of the Amonn-Raffeiner combination.

11. Dr. Innocenti's Position

- (a) One fact which impressed the SVP delegates was the all-powerful position of Innocenti in the South Tirol question, Innocenti is technical adviser to the Government on autonomy questions. He acts as liaison between De Gasperi and the Bonomi Commission of which he is a member. He is entrusted with the elaboration of the draft autonomy statutes on which this Commission later works. He is also competent in the optants' question.
- (b) The SVP delegates are today slightly more favorably disposed toward him than before their Rome visit. Volgger was particularly impressed by his seeming amiability. Amonn inclines to the belief that he is merely the competent and loyal official, who will faithfully carry out whatever instructions De Gasperi gives him. Guggenberg maintains his former mistrust of him, while admitting respect for his intelligence and charm.

12. Present Policy of the SVP

On 26 April the SVP delegates reported to their colleagues on the SVP Direction in Bolzano. At this conference present policy was discussed.

- (a) Emphasis was placed on the danger of giving the impression that the SVP delegates are too pleased with the results of their Rome trip. This might lead the Trentiners and others to the belief that they had reached a definite understanding with the Italians, and so cause them to go down to Rome with a view to changing the present attitude of the Italian Government. Both De Gasperi and Innocenti also advised against too much publicity being given to the recent talks.

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- (b) So far as the South Tirolese are concerned, it was decided to give them a vague picture of the results of the talks in an interview by Erich Amonn given to the local SVP organ, the Dolomiten, on 28 April.
- (c) So far as the Austrians, and North Tiroleans in particular, are concerned, it was felt that it would be better if for the moment the Austrian press refrained from writing anything.
- (d) No decision was reached on the very delicate question as to how the Trentiners should now be treated. The Trentiner Christian Democrats are due to visit the SVP leaders in Bolzano on 29 April. Guggenberg advocates that the SVP should merely tell the Trentiners that they found a certain understanding for their viewpoint in Rome, but that in all cases they are not worrying as a provincial autonomy has been assured them in Paris. Either the Italians will accept their proposals, or they will stick to their rights for a complete provincial autonomy. In such circumstances the Trentiners would be best advised to agree to the SVP proposals and to present with them a common front when the next deliberations take place in Rome. Guggenberg, however, was unable to obtain acceptance of this viewpoint at last Saturday's meeting.

13. Contacts with Austria

The greatest need is felt by the SVP leaders for immediate talks with Dr. Gruber, so that the SVP and Austrian policies may be coordinated during the fateful next weeks. Gruber at the moment has lost a great deal of his prestige in Bolzano, because of his insistence on postponing discussion of the South Tirol question until after Moscow. It is hoped, however, that he will see the utmost urgency of his intervening now. If he does not, there is danger of the whole South Tirol problem being settled without him. The SVP hope for an exchange of views with him almost immediately, at which a joint program will be agreed on, and further that they may count on his most active intervention at this very crucial stage of their history.

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