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FM ROME
TO THE WHITE HOUSE
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CONFIDENTIAL 301230Z OCT 71
FM AMBASSADOR MARTIN, ROME 1502
TO THE WHITE HOUSE, FOR THE PRESIDENT

1. JOHN VOLPE HAS JUST CONCLUDED A THREE DAY VISIT TO ROME. FROM EVERY POINT OF VIEW, IT HAS BEEN A RESOUNDING SUCCESS. AS YOU KNOW, THE FINAL DECISION ON THE ITALIAN VOTE ON THE IMPORTANT QUESTION RESOLUTION WAS A VERY CLOSE AFFAIR. MORO AND THE FOREIGN MINISTRY CLEARLY WERE ASSUMING A NEGATIVE VOTE TO BE QUIETLY DETERMINED BY THE FOREIGN MINISTRY ALONE, AND IT WAS GENERALLY ASSUMED BY THE LOCAL DIPLOMATIC CORPS THAT A NEGATIVE VOTE WAS ASSURED. THE PRESSURE CAMPAIGN WE MOUNTED THROUGH ALL CONCEIVABLE CHANNELS HAD FORCED CABINET CONSIDERATION. SARAGAT WENT CONSIDERABLY BEYOND THE CONSTITUTIONAL LIMITATIONS OF HIS OFFICE IN TRYING TO GET THE DECISION YOU WANTED. FANFANI AND DC SECRETARY FORLANI WERE ALSO HELPFUL.
2. YOUR TELEPHONE CALL ASSURED A DECISION AT LEAST FOR ABSTENTION RATHER THAN A NEGATIVE VOTE. I WAS STILL HOPING UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE THAT IT WOULD HAVE TIPPED THE SCALES FOR AN AFFIRMATIVE VOTE. IT ALMOST DID, BUT COLOMBO WOULD NOT RISK HIS TENURE AS PRIME MINISTER. MORO, OF COURSE, IS STILL SINGLEMINDEDLY KEEPING HIS EYE ON LEFTIST SUPPORT FOR THE PRESIDENCY.

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3. THIS WAS THE CONTEXT OF JOHN VOLPE'S ARRIVAL. COMING SO SOON AFTER THE ITALIAN FAILURE TO RESPOND FULLY TO YOUR PERSONAL APPEAL, A VISIT FROM ANY MEMBER OF YOUR CABINET COULD HAVE BEEN DISASTROUS. IF WE PRETENDED NOTHING HAD HAPPENED TO OFFEND US, MY GREATEST ASSET, WHICH IS YOUR VERY GREAT PERSONAL INFLUENCE HERE, WOULD HAVE BEEN CONSIDERABLY DIMINISHED. IF ANGER AT AND CRITICISM OF THEIR FAILURE TO SUPPORT US HAD BEEN TOO PUBLICLY EVIDENT, IT WOULD HAVE PROVIDED A FIELD DAY FOR THE SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA APPARATUS TO RING ALL THE CHANGES ON THE THEME OF "INTERFERENCE."

4. JOHN VOLPE THREADED HIS WAY THROUGH THESE THREE DAYS WITH A MASTERFUL PERFORMANCE. IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WITH PRESIDENT SARAGAT, PRIME MINISTER COLOMBO, FANFANI, MORO, RUMOR, ANDREAOTTI, FORLANI, AND THE LEADING MEMBERS OF ITALIAN BUSINESS COMMUNITY, HE LEFT NO DOUBT ABOUT THE DEPTH OF THE FEELING ARISING FROM LACK OF FULL ITALIAN SUPPORT. YET, HE DID IT IN A WAY WHICH BURNED NO BRIDGES BUT, INSTEAD, LAID A BETTER FOUNDATION FOR THE INTENSIVE EFFORTS WHICH WE MUST MAKE TO GET THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS TOGETHER AFTER THE POISON OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IS BEHIND US IN JANUARY.

5. HE WILL, OF COURSE, BE REPORTING MORE FULLY TO YOU ON HIS RETURN, INCLUDING HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH SENIOR VATICAN OFFICIALS WHICH I THINK YOU WILL FIND MOST INTERESTING.

6. TODAY, I BEGIN MY THIRD YEAR IN ROME. WE HAVE, I THINK, MADE STEADY PROGRESS IN CARRYING OUT YOUR INSTRUCTIONS TO KEEP THIS COUNTRY FROM DRIFTING FARTHER TO THE LEFT, AND TRY TO EDGE IT BACK TO A MORE CENTRIST AND STABLE POSITION.

I CAN TRUTHFULLY SAY THAT, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF YOUR OWN ENORMOUSLY POPULAR VISITS, THIS VISIT OF JOHN VOLPE HAS HELPED MORE THAN ANY OTHER. WHEN WE APPROACH THE "MOMENT OF TRUTH" AFTER THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, AND REALLY MOVE IN HARD ON THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT PARTY, I HOPE YOU WILL LET ME HAVE HIM VISIT ROME OFTEN. RESPECTFULLY,
GRAHAM MARTIN

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