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DESKBY 171630Z

FROM ROME 171550Z JUL 81

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 288 OF 17 JUL 81

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PS/N<sup>o</sup> 10

Prime Minister to see

N.P.G. Mitchell  
Duty Clerk  
18/7/81

PROPOSED BILATERAL SUMMIT: TELCON ARMOUR/TOMKYS

1. SPADOLINI MAY BE SEEKING BILATERAL MEETINGS WITH A NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS AT OTTAWA AND MAY NOT HAVE VERY SPECIFIC ANGLO/ ITALIAN OBJECTIVES IN MIND. HIS PRINCIPAL PREOCCUPATIONS, HOWEVER, WILL INCLUDE --

(A) THE WISH TO ESTABLISH HIMSELF A SOMETHING MORE THAN A TEMPORARY SUBSTITUTE, FOR A CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT-LED COALITION. SPADOLINI AND THE OTHER LAY PARTIES TO A LESSER EXTENT WILL SEE HIS APPOINTMENT AS A SUBSTANTIAL AND PERHAPS IRREVERSIBLE CHANGE WHICH WILL COMPEL THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS TO PUT THEIR HOUSE IN ORDER AND MAY LEAD TO A PROLONGED TENURE OF THE PREMIERSHIP BY MEMBERS OF THE LAY PARTIES. SPADOLINI WILL WANT TO KEEP THE JOB FOR HIMSELF, THE SOCIALISTS SEE HIM AS THEIR STALKING HORSE. HIS MESSAGE SHOULD BE THAT THIS DEVELOPMENT MARKS A HEALTHY PROGRESSION IN THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM WHICH BADLY NEEDED REGENERATION AND THAT IT DESERVES OUR SUPPORT. THERE IS SOMETHING IN THIS ARGUMENT THOUGH WE SHOULD NOT BECOME INVOLVED IN THE JUNGLE OF ITALIAN DOMESTIC POLITICAL DISPUTE, AND SPADOLINI WILL HAVE A DIFFICULT RIDE.

(B) HE WILL WITH TO STRESS THE FACT THAT HIS POSITION COULD BE UNDERMINED BY INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS, EG. BY FAILURE TO PROCEED WITH NEGOTIATIONS ON TNF OR BY INSENSITIVE WARNINGS, FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENTS IN FRANCE, IN STATEMENTS BY HIS WESTERN ALLIES (PARTICULARLY THE US) ABOUT THE PRINCIPLE OF INVOLVING THE COMMUNISTS IN GOVERNMENT. ON BOTH THESE ISSUES IT IS AMERICAN ATTITUDES WHICH WILL MOST CONCERN HIM BUT HE WILL WANT OUR UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT.

2. ON OUR SIDE, THE PRIME MINISTER WILL NO DOUBT WISH TO CONSOLIDATE THE GOOD WORK ALREADY DONE WITH COLOMBO IN SMOOTHING FEATHERS RUFFLED BY THE CHEVENING MEETING. SPADOLINI MAY WISH TO TALK ABOUT THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND MAY EXPRESS CONCERN OVER LABOUR PARTY COMMITMENTS TO WITHDRAWAL. THE ITALIAN POSITION ON THE 1% CEILING AND THEIR INTEREST AS THEY SEE IT IN INCREASED EXPENDITURE ON MEDITERRANEAN AGRICULTURE CONFLICT WITH OUR POLICY. HE COULD BE BROUGHT ALONG GENTLY ON THESE COMMUNITY ISSUES ON WHICH THE ITALIAN POSITION WILL NOT NECESSARILY PROVE UNHELPFUL IN THE LONG RUN BECAUSE OF THEIR OVERRIDING INTEREST IN THE DEVELOPEMENT OF THE COMMUNITY.

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3. IF THE PRIME MINISTER HAS AN OPENING TO TALK FRANKLY WITH SPADOLINI ABOUT NORTHERN IRELAND, IT MIGHT HELP GREATLY. AS A JOURNALIST AND AN ACADEMIC PREOCCUPIED WITH CHURCH HISTORY, SPADOLINI WILL CERTAINLY BE CLOSELY INTERESTED IN THE PROBLEM AND SHOULD NOT HAVE A CLOSED MIND. LIKE OTHER ITALIAN MINISTERS HE WILL BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE CIVIL DISTURBANCES IN BRITAIN.
4. IT WOULD ALSO HELP IF IT WERE POSSIBLE TO OFFER HIM THE PROSPECT OF A SUMMIT MEETING IN LONDON IN THE AUTUMN BEFORE THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, AS I HAVE ALREADY RECOMMENDED.

ARCULUS

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ECD (1)

NAD

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MR BULLARD

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