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SENATOR KENNEDY'S VISIT TO ROME

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LIMDIS

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, OREP

SUBJ: SENATOR KENNEDY'S VISIT TO ROME

SUMMARY: DURING A PRIVATE VISIT TO ROME, NOV. 11-14, SENATOR KENNEDY MET WITH A LARGE NUMBER OF I OFFICIALDOM, POLITICAL AND UNION LEADERS, INDUSTRIALISTS, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL LUMINARIES. STRESSING HIS SUPPORT FOR A FREE AND DEMOCRATIC ITALY COMMITTED TO NATO AND EUROPE, KENNEDY DEFLECTED FREQUENT QUESTIONS ON THE ADVISABILITY OF THE PCI'S ENTRY INTO GOVERNMENT BY STATING THAT THIS WAS A PROBLEM FOR ITALIANS TO DECIDE. MEDIA COVERAGE DOCUSED ON THE SENATOR'S ATTENDANCE AT A DINNER/DISCUSSION FUNCTION WHICH INCLUDED PCI FOREIGN AFFAIRS CHIEF SEGRE AMONG THE 30 GUESTS PRESENT. END SUMMARY.

1. ACCOMPANIED BY HIS NEPHEW JOSEPH, SENATOR EDWARD KENNEDY PAID A "PRIVATE VISIT" TO ROME, NOV. 11-14, AS A HOUSE GUEST OF FIAT PRESIDENT GIANNI AGNELLI. DURING THE COURSE OF HIS STAY, HE MET WITH PRESIDENT LEONE, PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI, AND FOREIGN MINISTER FORLANI, AND ALSO CALLED ON CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT (DC) AND SOCIALIST (PSI) PARTY HEADS, ZACCAGNINI AND CRAXI. IN ADDITION, KENNEDY CAME INTO CONTACT WITH PCI FOREIGN AFFAIRS CHIEF SEGRE AT A MUCH PUBLICIZED DINNER AND DISCUSSION ORGANIZED

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NOV. 12 UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS INSTITUTE (IAI). AT THIS AND OTHER LUNCH AND DINNER EVENTS, KENNEDY MET WITH A BROAD CROSS-SECTION OF ITALIAN GOVERNMENT, POLITICAL, LABOR ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL LEADERS. AT A LUNCH GIVEN BY THE AMBASSADOR, THE SENATOR WAS INTRODUCED TO SECOND AND THIRD GENERATION PARLIAMENTARIANS OF THE DC AND LAY PARTIES. CALLS WERE MADE ON FAO SECRETARY GENERAL SAOUMA AND WORLD FOOD COUNCIL DIRECTOR HANNAH. POPE PAUL RECEIVED THE KENNEDYS FOR A HALF-HOUR PRIVATE AUDIENCE. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF PRESIDENT LEONE'S LUNCH (AT WHICH THE AMBASSADOR WAS PRESENT) AT THE REQUEST OF THE SENATOR NO ONE FROM THE EMBASSY PARTICIPATED IN THE MEETINGS.

2. THE KENNEDY VISIT RECEIVED BROAD MEDIA COVERAGE, MUCH OF IT CENTERED ON BRIEF TV INTERVIEWS AND A PRESS CONFERENCE CONDUCTED AT THE GRAND HOTEL BEFORE THE IAI

AFFAIR. WITH THE PRESS, KENNEDY STRESSED HIS SUPPORT FOR FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY IN ITALY, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ITALY'S COMMITMENTS TO NATO AND A STRONG EUROPE. HE ALSO INDICATED HIS FULL SUPPORT FOR ANDREOTTI'S GOVERNMENT AND ECONOMIC PROGRAM. HE REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED THAT HE HAD COME TO ITALY AS AN INDIVIDUAL DEMOCRAXC SENATOR INTERESTED MORE IN LISTENING THAN IN TALKING. HE REPEATEDLY DENIED (WITH LITTLE SUCCESS) THAT HE HAD COME ON AN "EXPLORATIVE MISSION" FOR PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER.

3. TIME AND AGAIN, KENNEDY'S QUESTIONERS PROBED ONE BASIC THEME: DID THE SENATOR BELIEVE THAT THE PCI SHOULD ENTER THE GOVERNMENT? AS REPORTED IN THE PRESS, KENNEDY'S ANSWER WAS AS FOLLOWS: "ITALIAN DEMOCRACY IS MATURE AND ITALIANS CERTAINLY DON'T NEED LECTURES FROM AMERICAN POLITICIANS TO DECIDE WHO TO VOTE FOR. AT THIS TIME, ITALY HAS A GOVERNMENT WHICH IS TRYING TO RESOLVE THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS WITH A NUMBER OF CONCRETE MEASURES AND PROGRAMS. THE US SUPPORTS THIS EFFORT. AS TO FUTURE GOVERNMENTS, THOSE DECISIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN AS THE SITUATION DEVELOPS." WHEN ASKED WHAT HE THOUGHT OF "EURO-COMMUNISM," KENNEDY REPLIED OBLIQUELY:
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"CERTAINLY THE PCI IS DIFFERENT THAN THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY AND OTHER COMMUNIST PARTIES." TO PERHAPS THE MOST POINTED QUESTION OF ALL, (WHY HADN'T HE PAID AN OFFICIAL CALL ON THE PCI), THE SENATOR SAID: "IT WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN APPROPRIATE."

4. DISPLAYING THEIR USUAL LATITUDE IN APPROXIMATING STATEMENTS AND EVENTS, THE ITALIAN PRESS CHOSE TO ACCENT THOSE ASPECTS OF THE KENNEDY VISIT THAT ACCORDED WITH THE RESPECTIVE POLITICAL INTEREST OR SLANT OF INDIVIDUAL PAPERS. THUS, PAESE SERA (PCI LINE) HEADLINED NOV. 12: "CONTACTS WITH PARTY OFFICIALS--ZACCAGNINI, CRAXI AND PCI FOREIGN HEAD SERGIO SEGRE," SUGGESTING TO THE READER THAT THE SENATOR HAD FORMALLY CALLED ON SEGRE. IL GIORNALE NUOVO (MILAN INDEPENDENT CENTER) STRESSED THE OPPOSITE: "KENNEDY IN ROME: MEETING WITH COMMUNISTS INAPPROPRIATE." UNITA (PCI) PROVIDED MODEST COVERAGE, REPORTED THE STATEMENT ON "INAPPROPRIATENESS" OF A PCI MEETING AND ACCENTED KENNEDY'S NON-INTERFERENCE STANCE. STAMPA (TURIN-AGNELLI) FIRST BLARED: "KENNEDY IN ROME (FOR CARTER)" ONLY TO PUBLISH A DETAILED ANALYSIS ON THE FOLLOWING DAY EXPLAINING WHY "KENNEDY DID NOT COME ON CARTER'S BEHALF."

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5. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, SENATOR KENNEDY'S CONTACT WITH SEGRE WAS LIMITED TO A BRIEF EXCHANGE OF PLEASANTRIES DURING THE IAI DINNER (THEY WERE SEATED AT SOME DISTANCE). SEGRE REPORTEDLY ASKED TWO QUESTIONS DURING THE DISCUSSION PERIOD THAT FOLLOWED. NO PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE TWO APPEARED. (IAI HEAD MERLINI REPORTEDLY TOLD SEGRE BEFOREHAND THAT KENNEDY WANTS TO AVOID PICTURES--A A POINT THE KENNEDY PARTY DENIED MAKING BUT WHICH SEGRE APPARENTLY DUTIFULLY OBLIGED.) WE UNDERSTAND THAT AT LEAST THREE EFFORTS WERE MADE TO INSERT PCI ECONOMIC EXPERT NAPOLITANO ON A KENNEDY GUEST LIST, BUT THE KENNEDY GROUP REFUSED.

6. WE UNDERSTAND THAT KENNEDY'S CALL ON DC SECRETARY ZACCAGNINI "WENT WELL" BUT THAT BOTH THE QUESTIONS AND THE ANSWERS DID NOT DEPART FROM GENERALITIES. ACCORDING TO A DC SOURCE PRESENT AT THE MEETING, KENNEDY MADE A STRONG STATEMENT ON THE STEADFASTNESS OF THE US COMMITMENT TO THE FUTURE OF A DEMOCRATIC ITALY, BUT THAT ZACCAGNINI AFTERWARDS EXPRESSED PERPLEXITY AS TO THE PURPOSE OF THE SENATOR'S CALL.

7. ACCORDING TO A MEMBER OF THE KENNEDY PARTY,
SOCIALIST LEADER CRAXI WAS BY FAR THE MOST IMPRESSIVE
OF THE ITALIAN POLITICAL LEADERS THAT THE SENATOR MET.
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THE CONVERSATION WAS APPARENTLY POINTED AND DIRECT.
AFTERWARDS, CRAXI TOLD THE PRESS: "I RECEIVED THE
IMPRESSION OF GREAT INTEREST IN OUR PROBLEMS AND
ATTENTION TO THE ROLE AND POSITION OF OUR PARTY."
ALTHOUGH THE KENNEDY GROUP DENIED MAKING THE
STATEMENT, SEVERAL PRESS ACCOUNTS QUOTE " A MEMBER OF
THE PARTY" DESCRIBING THE PSI "AS THE PIVOT OF THE
ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION." COMMENT: THE
SOCIALISTS PLAYED UP THE KENNEDY VISIT FOR ALL THAT IT
WAS WORTH.

8. KENNEDY WAS INTRODUCED TO LEADERS OF THE LAY PARTIES
AT THE IAI DINNER AND OTHER SOCIAL OCCASIONS. TRUE TO
CHARACTER, VETERAN REPUBLICAN LEADER LA MALFA TOOK
UMBRAGE AT KENNEDY'S NEGLECT TO CALL ON HIM INDIVIDUALLY
(NOTWITHSTANDING THE SENATOR'S CROWDED SCHEDULE), IN-
FORMING IAI ORGANIZERS THAT HE (LA MALFA) WOULD
THEREFORE NOT ATTEND THE DINNER. VISITING THE CHAMBER
OF DEPUTIES, KENNEDY FOUND THE OCCASION TO GREET LA
MALFA PUBLICLY. ALTHOUGH THUS ASSUAGED, LA MALFA
NEVERTHELESS BEGGED OFF THE DINNER SENDING A PRI
DEPUTY INSTEAD.

9. COMMENT: THE MORE THOUGHTFUL ITALIAN

MIGHT TAKE SENATOR KENNEDY'S STATEMENT AT FACE VALUE THAT HE DID NOT REPRESENT THE NEW ADMINISTRATION OR SEEK ANY CHANGE IN THE CURENT POLITICAL FRAMEWORK. HE WILL NOTE THAT KENNEDY'S MESSAGE WAS ESSENTIALLY ONE OF SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRACY IN ITALY, CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO THE WESTERN ALLIANCE AND EUROPE, AND SOLIDARITY WITH THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT IN FACING ITALY'S CURRENT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. HE WILL DRAW THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN OFFICIAL CALLS ON THE DC AND THE PSI AND A DINNER GATHERING OF 30 WITH A PCI OFFICIAL IN ATTENDANCE. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE SUSPECT THAT THOSE ALREADY INCLINED TO LEFTIST INTERPRETATIONS WILL TEND TO READ INTO THE SEGRE "MEETING" WHAT THEY WISH IT TO MEAN: A SHIFT TOWARD GREATER ACCEPTAILITY OF THE PCI. OF GREATER IMPORTANCE, PERHAPS, IS THE IMPACT OF THE KENNEDY VISIT WITHIN THE PCI ITSELF. IF THE PARTY HAD HOPED THATKENNEDY WAS BRINGING A MESSAGE FROM THE

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NEW ADMINISTRATION, IT MUST CERTAINLY BE DISAPPOINTED AT THE SENATOR'S CAUTIOUS TREATMENT OF THE PCI ISSUE. FOR ALL THE FAVORABLE PUBLICITY OF SEGRE'S ATTENDANCE, KENNEDY MADE CLEAR (REINFORCED BY THE REFUSALS TO SEE NAPOLITANO) THAT HE WISHED TO MAINTAIN A DISTINCT DISTANCE.VOLPE

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