

223. Editorial Note

Between 4:50 and 5:06 p.m., April 4, 1972, President Richard Nixon and President's Assistant for National Security Affairs Henry Kissinger met with the departing French Ambassador Charles Lucet. In the course of a discussion of U.S.-French relations, the conversation turned to Italy, Lucet's next Ambassadorial assignment. The President told Lucet, "I would appreciate your keeping in close touch" with U.S. Ambassador Graham Martin, who was "a very intelligent fellow. Not a very great social fellow, but he's very intelligent—knows things." He continued: "We all have an interest in a strong Italy. I mean, we really have, keeping it—keeping that country from—I mean, they're such fine people, but just that lack of leadership. That's what they need." Kissinger added: "And, there may be a coup there if this chaos continues." Nixon queried: "Who? Who would go along? The Left—?" Kissinger interrupted: "Either the Right or the Left." The President then replied: "Well, let's hope to God it's the Right." The conversation concluded shortly thereafter. (National Archives, Nixon Presidential Materials, White House Tapes, Conversation 702-7) The editor transcribed the portion of the conversation printed here specifically for this volume.

**224. Memorandum From the Chief of the European Division,
Directorate of Plans, Central Intelligence Agency (Roosevelt)
to Director of Central Intelligence Helms¹**

Washington, October 13, 1972.

SUBJECT

Status of the Political Action Program for Italy

1. This memorandum is for your information only. It contains a review of the political action program for Italy and notes activities presently being undertaken by the Ambassador [*less than 1 line not declassified*] to support this program.

¹ Source: Central Intelligence Agency, DO/EUR Files, Job 90-01383R. Secret. Sent through the Deputy Director of Plans.

2. On 10 March 1971, the 40 Committee, acting principally on the initiative of Ambassador Martin, approved a diversified political action program for Italy designed to arrest the growing power of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and to strengthen the political center.² Approximately [less than 1 line not declassified] dollars were allotted for the implementation of the program. Although it was not envisioned exclusively as election-oriented, the national elections routinely scheduled for May 1973 were seen as a natural point at which the progress of the program could be assessed. The Ambassador, who directed the program, [less than 1 line not declassified] spending the latter half of 1971 analyzing the situation and preparing the groundwork for the program. [6 lines not declassified]

3. However, the normal course of Italian political developments was altered in December 1971 when for the first time a President of Italy (a Christian Democrat) was elected without Socialist or Communist support, indicating that an alternative had to be found to the decade-old center-left government formula which had grouped the Christian Democrats with the Socialists in an uneasy coalition. Therefore, national elections were called one year early; i.e., in May 1972 rather than May 1973. This drastically shortened the time available to implement the election phase of the program. The Ambassador [less than 1 line not declassified] moved quickly, however, to identify these elements on the Italian political scene which could benefit from a subsidy, and to decide on secure methods for transferral of funds. [5 lines not declassified]

4. [1 paragraph (21 lines) not declassified]

5. The election results made it possible for the Christian Democrats to form a center coalition government including the Social Democrats and the Liberals, with the outside support of the Republicans, but excluding the Socialists. Although the margin of votes is slim (about 15 in a 630-man chamber), the government has been able to maintain itself and it appears possible it will continue at least through the Spring of 1973 despite the pressure from the left to re-form a center-left coalition with the Socialists.

6. Since the program was directed by the Ambassador, [less than 1 line not declassified] the Ambassador should take the lead in presenting to the White House and the 40 Committee a report on the overall results of the program. Although he has not, [less than 1 line not declassified] Headquarters' knowledge, made such a report, he has indicated his intention to do so. He might do this personally if he visits Washington in October or November 1972, [less than 1 line not declassified] The [less than

² See Document 208.

1 line not declassified] interim report, [*less than 1 line not declassified*] on the results of the program through the May elections, can be summarized as follows:

The program funds backed a considerable number of winners proportionate to the number of candidates actually given funds, and the parties and flanking organizations to whom assistance was given came out of the elections in condition to fulfill the roles we would like to see them play. In some cases the results were even better than had been anticipated, [*3 lines not declassified*] We have every reason to be satisfied with the results and the prospects for the future, [*6 lines not declassified*] It remains difficult, if not impossible, to formulate a really satisfactory judgment on exactly what weight our aid had in the case of some of the larger operations, but this should not detract from our overall satisfaction with the results.

7. [*1 paragraph (10 lines) not declassified*]

8. [*1 paragraph (19 lines) not declassified*]

Archibald B. Roosevelt, Jr.³

³ Roosevelt signed "A Roosevelt" above his typed signature.