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October 31, 1963

Memorandum for Governor Harriman

Subject: Personal Comments on Federico Sensi, Segni's Emissary

Federico Sensi, Segni's man of confidence, has arrived here to scout the way for his chief's visit in January. I have set forth below my own personal opinion of Sensi and my guess as to what he will do.

Sensi is from the south. He is probably somewhere around 45, and has served as a diplomat in this country. His English is excellent. He is an adviser to Segni and apparently very close to the latter. He is suave, clever and active. Possibly no other single Italian has had as much direct influence on Rome Embassy personnel's thinking over a comparable period of time. In some important cases he was the main source of "information", much of which was very misleading. On some occasions he has made himself really useful by smoothing over difficulties which have arisen between Italians and the Embassy. Despite his clear and generally accepted identification with the center-right, he also is reported to maintain ties with some left of center elements, possibly to protect himself politically in case Segni's fortunes decline. At all events many people regard him as a skillful opportunist. I share that view, although I have the impression that his glibness tends to be fairly superficial. I have only chatted with him two or three times but I have seen him in action and I know how effective he was in indoctrinating the Embassy with Segni's views. In regular Italian political life, of course, he counts for very little. But as Segni's man he cuts a wide swath in Roman diplomatic circles. I believe his influence on our policy and thinking in the past has been unfortunate. So far as I can see he is only a liability in the fight against the Italian Communist Party, but he plays an important role in Segni's efforts to block the center-left.

I would guess Sensi has several objectives in mind during this visit. Certainly he will try to influence key Americans regarding Italian affairs. He most assuredly will sound out official and unofficial thinking, and try to ascertain what tactics would be most useful for Segni when he comes. Undoubtedly he will seek possible allies in the Department and elsewhere. Probably he will consult with conservative forces in this country and will try to estimate their chances for victory next year.

I understand Sensi is to be guest of honor at an Italian Embassy dinner this evening.
George Lister - EUR/SES
cc: Arthur Schlesinger, jr.

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By ctm, NARA, Date 1-18-02

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