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April 5, 1962

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MEMORANDUM TO: WE - Mr. Velletri
FROM: M - George Lister
SUBJECT: Comments by Paolo Vittorelli

DECLASSIFIED
E.O. 13526, Sec. 3.5
NLJ/LIS 06-18
By clm, NARA, Date 1-18-07

This memorandum discusses several matters which Paolo Vittorelli mentioned to me during his recent visit to Washington, and serves to some extent as a sequel to the March 7 memorandum I prepared prior to his arrival.

1) During the first good talk we had together here, Vittorelli said that there was one matter he wished to discuss urgently and privately with me. He stated that prior to his departure from Italy, Bensi had confided in him that he (Bensi) and Cattani had talked to me at Geneva and elsewhere about the possibility of obtaining covert assistance for the Bensi-Matteotti-Cattani group (on the extreme right wing of the autonomists). Vittorelli thereupon had become very upset and had gone to Nenni to find out whether the Socialist leader had known of those approaches and approved of them. Nenni assured Vittorelli he had not known of them and that they had been unauthorized. Vittorelli said he wanted me to know this, and to understand that neither the Socialist Party nor the autonomist faction would countenance accepting American assistance. He was very critical of Bensi and the other rightwingers (as he has been in the past) and said that such maneuvers made the Socialist Party look cheap. He added that since I knew Lombardi's views on that matter, I could imagine what the latter's reaction would have been if Vittorelli had informed him of Bensi's overtures. In replying, I neither admitted nor denied that such talks had taken place but limited myself to stating that I thought he was distorting what he had heard from Bensi as well as exaggerating its importance, that political officers were accustomed to listening to anyone who wanted to talk to them, and that at all events nobody in Washington regarded the PSI as "cheap". I suggested that he would be doing both his party and his faction, as well as us, a disservice if he repeated this story to others, including Lombardi. Vittorelli said he was well aware of this and that he had no intention of talking to anyone else about it.

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Comment:

I do not know why Bensi told (if he did) Vittorelli of the Geneva conversations. At the time, Bensi said repeatedly that Nenni was aware of them and it is my feeling that he was. On one occasion when Pieraccini (of the predominant Nenni group in the center of the autonomists) asked me privately for our assistance he specifically requested that every precaution be taken not to let the Lombardi group (the autonomists' left wing) know of it, because Lombardi would be strongly opposed. I know of nobody in the top party echelons closer to Nenni at this time than Pieraccini. Probably Nenni did tell Vittorelli he had not known of the Geneva conversations, but I doubt this was the truth. Just why the Lombardi group is so strongly opposed to aid is not entirely clear to me. Possibly, among other things, *genuinely* Lombardi fears a PSI "sell-out" to the Americans, and at the same time hopes to keep Nenni weak, or perhaps he is afraid that he and his group would be excluded from such an arrangement. At any rate my March 7 memorandum recommended that we not discuss material assistance with Vittorelli, and referred to the Nenni group's desire to avoid involving the Lombardi people in such matters.

2) Vittorelli said that he had also been unpleasantly surprised when a fellow autonomist had recently applied at Rome for a visa to visit his dying mother in the United States and had been turned down because of his membership in the Socialist Party. Vittorelli had assumed that, since we had given him a visa and invited other Socialist leaders to come, we had "adjusted" our visa policy to the "new political situation" in Italy. Now, he asserted, he saw that we had only made an exception in his case and those of the other leader grant recipients (he knows little or nothing of our visa regulations, waiver requirements, etc.). I asked him whether the fact that he was sitting in the Department's cafeteria with me, plus the fact that we had issued invitations to several other PSI leaders, did not reflect an adjustment in our visa policy. I also suggested that since his was the first Socialist visit to the Department perhaps it would be better not to start off by bringing up this matter. After some reflection he agreed. However, he did point out that the visa incident was an example of the sort of thing that made it hard for him to praise the United States in the PSI, for he would

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immediately be vulnerable to the criticism that he spoke well of those who gave him a visa and trip even though they turned down a party comrade.

Comment: In this instance, of course, the main point is not Vittorelli's anguish, for he is considerably more sophisticated than most Socialists, but rather the confusion among the autonomist leaders in Italy as to why some are invited on trips and others are refused entry even if they pay their own way.

3) Vittorelli also asked whether I thought it would be a good thing for him to accompany Nenni to the United States when the latter comes, since the PSI leader does not speak English. I replied that my own feeling was that when an Italian Socialist came here he should come alone, and leave everything Italian behind him for a few weeks. Vittorelli responded that he supposed I was right but that, in that case, we should be sure to have people around who spoke Italian when Nenni descended from the plane, for otherwise he would feel completely lost in these strange surroundings. I assured him all the old Italian hands would take a special interest, and that furthermore we had excellent interpreters for the tour of the country.

Comment:

My real motive in this case was to avoid saying anything which would enable Vittorelli to tell Nenni that "the Americans" wanted Vittorelli to accompany him on his trip here. As stated previously, I do not think Vittorelli has Nenni's complete confidence. For example, Vittorelli told me that when Nenni approved his current trip the Socialist leader asked whether he did not want to have Bensi to accompany him. Vittorelli told me this as an example of how Nenni wanted to be sure that Bensi (who is also invited) would be "controlled". However, I think it may well have reflected Nenni's desire to have some check on what Vittorelli did and said here. At all events, if Nenni wants Vittorelli to come with him he can say so.

Conclusion

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Conclusion

I trust that no reader will be shocked or surprised to the extent of thinking that sections 1 and 3 show Vittorelli is more "devious" or "conniving" than other politicians in Italy or, for that matter, elsewhere. None of the foregoing should be construed as intended to detract from any of the good things I said about Vittorelli in my March 7 memorandum. Vittorelli has many things to recommend him. He has been very helpful to us in the past and may prove even more helpful in the future. I think his visit will prove excellent for him and very useful for us, even though that may not become apparent publicly very soon. Thus far his impressions of what he has seen, and of his conversations in the Department and elsewhere, have been excellent. All of the foregoing should be read in the context of the complicated in-fighting continually going on (even when we do not know of it) behind the scenes of Italian politics.

Vittorelli is scheduled to be back in Washington on April 23 for about three days.

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M - GLister:fjm