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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

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E.O. 13252, Sec. 3.5  
NLJ/LIS 06-19  
By ebm, NARA, Date 6-18-07

Since returning to the Department I have read in my personnel folder my last efficiency reports from Rome, as well as the last Inspector's lengthy report, and I feel some clarification on my part might be desirable as regards their comments on the difference of views within the Embassy and the issues involved. Unfortunately, it is really impossible to discuss this subject intelligibly without setting forth many details, including a description of the extremely complicated Italian political situation. I prepared such a memorandum but I felt it was so long as to be wholly unsuitable for inclusion in my file. Therefore, I have intentionally limited this redraft as close as possible to two pages, even though it may well be misleading to allow various specific statements in my file to go unanswered. Several officers who served with me in the Political Section of the Embassy are now in Washington: Mr. Earl Sohm (FSO-2), who was Deputy Chief of the Section and is now in the Personnel Operations Division; Mr. R. Clayton Mudd (FSO-3), now on the Yugoslav Desk; and Mr. Augustus Velletri (FSO-4), now in the Bureau of Administration. Also, Mr. Sam Lewis, presently attached to Mr. Bowles' office, was on the Italian Desk at the time of most of the events described herein.

I am neither a troublemaker nor a chronic complainer, and I would have much preferred to avoid an "on the record" discussion of this subject, which I feel was both unnecessary and unfortunate. It became a part of the record in the Efficiency Report dated February, 1961 (and discussed with me at about that time, although apparently not submitted to the Department until July), which alleged I had failed to cooperate properly and had shown a lack of organizational discipline during at least part of the two-month period under review. I felt that I should not leave this report unclarified. I believe it was this which led the Inspector to state that I regarded myself as "the aggrieved party" and was bent on "making an issue". I am not, and have not been, particularly concerned with the matter of specific performance evaluations and ratings (4,5, etc.). However, I do feel that I am cognizant of the need for maintaining discipline and that I have tried to cooperate to the fullest extent possible in performing my duties without prejudicing the interests of the United States. I might add that nothing in this memorandum is intended to be critical of anyone else. Lastly, since the February, 1961 Efficiency Report also refers to self-righteousness on my part, I would like to state that I think I have a fairly good sense of humor about most things, including myself.

So far as I am concerned, there is no reason whatever for a basic difference of opinion and judgment, which frequently can be both helpful and stimulating, to lead to any difficulties within an Embassy. Nor did

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I, or any other officer at Rome to my knowledge, ever question/the views of superiors not only should, but must, prevail over those of subordinate. The main point I wish to make clear, however, is that, quite apart from any difference of views, there was great concern on the part of a number of political officers lest the Embassy make policy recommendations, report and interpret Italian political developments, and conduct certain of its activities in Italy which might very well influence the course of those developments, without Embassy reasoning and motives being clearly understood in the Department. Specifically, the officers were worried lest the Embassy be influenced by a desire (expressed orally but not stated in official communications) to drive the Italian Socialists back towards the Communists without such a tactic having been approved in Washington. It was felt that if this was part of the reasoning behind the Embassy's recommendations and activities, overt and covert, it was desirable for the Department to be so advised. The officers' concern was greatly aggravated by the fact that this was a matter directly involving, among other things, the largest Communist party in the Free World, operating in an area vital to our security in Western Europe. It was this combination of factors, and not a mere difference of views, which made the situation both unique and dangerous. I repeatedly tried to make this point clear to the Inspector. I do not believe that anything I did, or did not do, at Rome would indicate any lack of willingness to cooperate in every way possible in order to help achieve whatever objectives received the Department's approval, regardless of whether I happened to be in agreement or not.

The very brief conversation with Ambassador Zellerbach which took place at my request on July 1, 1960, a most critical juncture in Italian domestic political affairs, was limited exclusively on my part to an expression of concern of the internal political reporting officers over an Embassy paper of policy recommendations, and I made no criticism of anyone. This step did not evoke a reprimand from the Ambassador and it was my impression that it was generally felt the additional discussion, oral and written, which followed this conversation had served a useful purpose. It was the only action of this kind I had taken in 20 years of service.

The following are a few of the various other statements appearing in my file which need clarification. 1) Without ever having broached the subject to me, the Inspector reported that I went to see Ambassador Harriman on my own initiative. In actual fact I was assigned to serve as Ambassador Harriman's interpreter during part of his visit, and he specifically asked me to come to his hotel, to discuss the Italian political situation. 2) At no time did the Political Counselor indicate to me that he considered any memorandum of mine to be disrespectful (nor did I ever intend any to be so), and his February 1961 Efficiency Report was not

prepared until he had left the post. 3) I did not claim that Embassy policy views changed solely because of my efforts, and I am not now, nor have I been, concerned with arguing these matters. 4) I never challenged the competence of the senior officers or their right, indeed their duty, to take whatever decisions they chose, and I am well aware that it is not customary to include junior officers in high level policy meetings. 5) I have had supervisory experience in political work at Moscow and the Department, and I agree that the responsibility for maintaining good relations rests most heavily with subordinates. 6) I fully realize that the use of memoranda of conversation is optional. During the period the ban on such memoranda existed at Rome, that is, until shortly before the Inspector's arrival, I feared it would become more difficult for the Department to make an independent assessment of the Italian political situation. At all events the Department commented adversely on the cessation of the memoranda. 7) During the conversation described in the comment on my Efficiency Report of June 1961 I was far less concerned with specific ratings than with the prospect of having the February, 1961 report, criticizing me for lack of discipline and cooperativeness, become a part of my permanent record. And during the conversation there again arose the fundamental issue involved, that is, motivations as regards the Italian Socialists which still had not been made clear to the Department and which, by that time, were directly contrary to our officially approved policy.

In conclusion, I might say that the preparation of this memorandum (the most difficult I have ever written) has been a sad and dreary task - an awkward, unpleasant climax to four years of work in Rome which, although they included some very painful, even heartbreaking hours, also provided some of the most interesting and satisfying experiences of my life. After 11 consecutive years immersed in Eastern European affairs (including Moscow, Warsaw, a year of training in Soviet-Communist studies at Regensburg, and the Polish Desk), I had wanted very much an assignment in a free country with a large Communist Party, and I feel I was most fortunate in being sent to Italy. I wish my performance could have continued as smoothly and satisfactorily as the reports during the first years there indicate (and I might point out that the 1959 Efficiency Report specifically states that I accept direction well and take overruling with good grace). I was quite aware that my chances of promotion (and thus the opportunity for an assignment to either the National War College or the Senior Officers Course) would diminish if I became involved, at my rank (FSO-3), in a controversy which at the very best would arouse irritation, difficulties and criticism and would remain a part of my permanent record long after the issues had been forgotten. Certainly I could easily have avoided involvement and profited thereby.

I personally feel that my becoming involved served our interests in Italy and was in the spirit of both the recent Congressional Code of Ethics, calling on all Government employees to put loyalty to country

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above loyalty to persons, party or Government department, and of the following statement by the President in his 1961 State of the Union Message: "Let it be clear that this Administration recognizes the value of daring and dissent - that we greet healthy controversy as the hallmark of healthy change". Regardless of who was at fault in this matter I am sincerely sorry for any difficulties I have caused. I hope this matter can now be regarded as closed, once and for all.

George Lister

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