

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

*Intelligence
Note* - 605

July 31, 1968

To : The Secretary
Through: S/S
From : INR - Thomas L. Hughes *TLH*

Subject: Italian Parliament Gives Overwhelming Backing to NPT

On July 26, the Italian Chamber of Deputies, following the example set the week before by the Senate, approved by a nearly unanimous vote the Leone Government's decision to adhere to the NPT. This action not only ensures early Italian signature of the treaty, but, equally important, makes final parliamentary ratification a mere formality. It will not, however, put an end to the lamentations of the opponents of "nuclear abstinence" in the Italian Foreign and Defense Ministries.

A "Solemn" Decision. A measure of the momentous importance that the Leone Government (like the Moro Government before it) attaches to its "solemn" decision to adhere to the NPT lies in the fact that parliament was called on to approve that decision even before the government had formally signed the treaty. Only once before in the history of post-war Italy had such a procedure been adopted with regard to a foreign policy issue. It occurred in 1948 when the government of Premier Alcide De Gasperi asked and received parliamentary approval for its decision to adhere to NATO. However, whereas De Gasperi initiated that unusual procedure in order to get a clear mandate on an issue which found both parliament and public opinion bitterly divided, the Leone government has resorted to it on an issue which had virtually unanimous support of both parliament and the country -- truly a rare occurrence in Italian politics.

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By asking for and receiving prior parliamentary approval for its adherence to the NPT, the Leone Government sought in effect to make parliament and "accomplice before the fact" on a policy which a few influential Italians fear will condemn present and future generations to permanent nuclear abstinence, a condition which is generally equated with permanent "second class" status for both Italy and the Italians. Should history one day prove the opponents of the NPT right, or, more precisely, should their arguments become more popular in Italy than they are now, the members of the Leone Government can derive some satisfaction from the knowledge that the decision to adhere to the NPT got the approval of 90% of the Italian parliament, which is presumably vox populi. Only 5% (the rightist Neo-Fascists and Monarchists) voted against. The remaining 5% (the conservative Liberals) abstained.

Timing of Italian Signature. Although Italian lack of promptness is notorious, there is little doubt that the magnitude of formal parliamentary support for Italian adherence to the NPT augurs well for an early Italian signature. The generally recognized Italian flair for a sense of timing would lead us to believe that signature will be forthcoming at some dramatic moment either immediately before or after the convening of the Non-Nuclear Conference in late August. At any rate, the Italian commitment to sign the NPT now seems irreversible and subsequent Italian ratification appears to be a mere formality, although actual deposit of instrument of ratification may be delayed, as recommended by the EURATOM Commission in Brussels, until agreement has been reached between EURATOM and the IAEA on inspection procedures under the NPT.

Nevertheless, unhappiness over the NPT runs strong, particularly among some elements in the Italian Foreign Ministry who have responsibility for the handling of disarmament matters. We can anticipate, therefore, that instructions will continue to pour out to Italian diplomatic posts requesting consideration, if not acceptance, by other governments of Italian suggestions in regard to such things as "definitions" and "interpretations" of those parts of the treaty text which are believed to be not only harmful to Italian interest, but equally important, offensive to the Italian national ego. The Foreign Ministry also attaches considerable importance to the forthcoming Non-Nuclear Conference in Geneva, which should provide additional opportunities to further these aims.