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26 MAY 81

ITALY: Government To Resign

The Forlani government is expected to resign today following Socialist Party Secretary Craxi's refusal to accept the Prime Minister's suggestion that political fallout from the spreading Masonic Lodge scandal be minimized by reshuffling ministerial portfolios.

The scandal has already forced the resignation of Justice Minister Sarti. Pressure is now building for Minister of Public Administration Darida and Minister of Foreign Trade Manca to resign.

Manca is a Socialist, and Craxi almost certainly aims to divert public attention away from his party's role in the Masonic affair prior to important local and regional elections scheduled for next month.

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The gambit is intended to boost his party's chances in the elections and help his own ambitions to lead a future government. Craxi probably also is seeking to steal the spotlight from the Communists--the first party to call for the government's resignation over the Masonic scandal.

Craxi is not likely to press his demands to form a successor to the Forlani government until after the elections. In the interim, Forlani probably will be able to piece together a new cabinet based on the existing four party coalition formula.

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