

Italy

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Intelligence Information Cable

EO 12958 3.4(b)(1)-25Yrs
(C)

COUNTRY ITALY

[REDACTED]

DATE OF INFO.

[REDACTED]

DISTR. 8 AUGUST 1964

SUBJECT

HEALTH CONDITION OF ITALIAN PRESIDENT ANTONIO SEGNI

EO 12958
3.4(b)(1)-25Yrs
(C)

PLACE & DATE ACQ.

[REDACTED]

REF

IN (46236)

SOURCE AND APPRAISAL:

[REDACTED]

EO 12958
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1. LATE IN THE AFTERNOON OF 7 AUGUST, PRESIDENT ANTONIO SEGNI SUFFERED A STROKE IN THE LEFT SIDE OF THE BRAIN WHICH, FOR A MOMENT ANYWAY, PARALYZED ALL MOTOR FACULTIES OF THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE BODY. BARRING UNFORESEEN DEVELOPMENTS, THERE IS NO REASON TO FEAR DANGER OF DEATH. AT THE SAME TIME, IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT HE WILL EVER RECOVER SUFFICIENTLY TO RESUME HIS DUTIES. ARTICLE 86 OF THE ITALIAN CONSTITUTION STATES THAT, WHEN THE PRESIDENT IS UNABLE TO FULFILL HIS CONSTITUTIONAL FUNCTIONS, THESE ARE TAKEN OVER BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE, PRESENTLY SENATOR CESARE MERZAGORA. HOWEVER, THERE IS A CATCH IN THIS CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION IN THAT NO MECHANISM IS PROVIDED FOR DECIDING WHEN THIS SITUATION IS TO BE MET. [REDACTED] COMMENTS: SENATOR MERZAGORA, POLITICALLY AN INDEPENDENT, HAS BEEN CONSISTENTLY ELECTED TO THE SENATE WITH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC (DC) VOTES SINCE 1948. HE WAS ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE

EO 12958
3.4(b)(1)-25Yrs
(C)

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GROUP 1
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EXO

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~~SECRET~~

IN 46236

PAGE 2

SENATE ON 25 JUNE 1953. MERZAGORA WAS THE DC CANDIDATE IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF APRIL 1955, BUT LOST TO GIOVANNI GRONCHI. ON 3 MARCH 1963 HE WAS NAMED SENATOR FOR LIFE BY SEGNI. MERZAGORA'S PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND IS IN BUSINESS AND BANKING.)

2. ACCORDING TO OPINIONS HELD IN GOVERNMENTAL CIRCLES, THE FOLLOWING POSSIBILITIES ARE FORESEEN:

A. SEGNI WILL RECOVER IN FULL. THIS IS VERY UNLIKELY. A MORE FIRM DIAGNOSIS WILL BE POSSIBLE IN THREE DAYS.

B. SEGNI WILL RECOVER SUFFICIENTLY TO RESIGN VOLUNTARILY.

C. FACED WITH SEGNI'S OBVIOUS INCAPACITY TO EVEN ISSUE DIRECTIVES, MERZAGORA, WITH THE NECESSARY POLITICAL BACKING, WILL APPOINT A COMMISSION OF LEADING MEDICAL EXPERTS WHO WILL ARRIVE AT THE JUDGEMENT THAT THE PRESIDENT IS UNABLE TO FULFILL HIS DUTIES, IN WHICH CASE AN ELECTION FOR THE NEW PRESIDENT IS CALLED WITHIN 15 DAYS. THE CONSENSUS, HOWEVER, IS THAT, GIVEN THE NATURE OF THE ILLNESS AND BARRING A DRASTIC TURN FOR THE WORSE, THIS POSSIBILITY WOULD PROBABLY REQUIRE 60 TO 90 DAYS SINCE THERE WOULD ALWAYS BE AN OUTSIDE CHANCE FOR RECOVERY, MEDICAL EXPERTS COULD BE EXPECTED TO MOVE ONLY WITH THE GREATEST CAUTION. [REDACTED] COMMENT: ARTICLE 84 OF THE ITALIAN CONSTITUTION PRESCRIBES THAT: "THE FUNCTIONS OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE

EO 12958
3.4(b)(1)-25Yrs
(C)

CLASSIFICATION - DISSEMINATION CONTROLS

~~SECRET~~

EO 12958
3.4(b)(1)-25Yrs
(C)

CLASSIFICATION - DISSEMINATION CONTROLS

~~SECRET~~

IN 46236

PAGE 3

REPUBLIC, IN EACH CASE IN WHICH HE CANNOT PERFORM THEM, ARE EXERCISED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE. IN CASE OF PERMANENT DISABILITY, DEATH, OR RESIGNATION OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, THE PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES ANNOUNCES THE ELECTION OF PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC WITHIN FIFTEEN DAYS, EXCEPT FOR LONGER PERIOD PROVIDED FOR WHEN THE CHAMBERS ARE DISSOLVED OR WHEN THEIR TERM HAS LESS THAN THREE MONTHS TO RUN.")

END OF MESSAGE

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