

August 17, 1974

**Telegram No. ROM/101/1/73 Indian Ambassador to
Italy to Ministry of External Affairs**

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Summary:

In a telegram to India's Secretary (E) V.C. Trivedi, Apa B. Pant, India's Ambassador to Italy, describes the Italian reaction to US President Richard Nixon's resignation amidst the Watergate scandal. Pant relates that most Italians are in utter disbelief over Nixon's resignation. He also finds that intellectual circles in Italy believe the scandal to be indicative of a flawed US political system, while political circles in Italy seemingly view the episode as a welcome development for the welfare of Europe.

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The anguished, and, agonising departure of President Nixon came at a time when 90% of Italy was on a holiday!! Nevertheless there have been some very interesting comments in the press and from some of the intellectuals on this historic event in which for more reasons than one Italy is deeply involved. As you know nearly 60% of the Italian population have their relations living in America. They regularly receive, mostly in the black market, large sums of money from them. The judge who is investigating Mr. Nixon's case and the Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee are Italians !! From Sicily and the southern portions of Italy nearly 80% of the people have their relations in America. They visit America constantly and the politics there as well as in Southern America is a matter of great concern to the Italians.

Still most of the Italians do not understand, why, because of Watergate, President Nixon has had to leave office!! There are hundreds of Watergates everyday in Italy!!! Here it is the normal process of political life, bribery, corruption, lying, cheating. For thousands of years, the Italians have had corrupt governments, tyrants and people who suppressed and tortured them. To them what Nixon had done is nothing out of the ordinary and really not that bad at all!!

However, the intellectuals like Alberto Moravia the Nobel Prize Winner, Carlo Livi and Ugo Stille and others have expressed the fear that this episode of the resignation of an American President at this time, and, in this way, only goes in to show how American democracy does not function properly and what are the real, hidden dangers, and, defects of this colossal machinery of government of the greatest power on earth. Their view is that the whole process of investigation and resignation is not indicative of how

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"alive and thriving" the American democratic system is but that how very near to a total dictatorship the American system is, and, if a chance talk by two persons or, a couple of courageous correspondents taking action as they did, had not been there. Nixon would have got away with it all. They also feel that by and large the American population was not very greatly exercised about what Nixon did in order to collect more funds for his party or to keep himself in power. The American people, like the Italians, took all these actions for granted. That the other, offended, political party went into the battle, and, that the news media took it up was also, it is assumed here, natural, normal. Only when the Americans found out that Nixon was all the way lying to them consistently did they get upset with him. Even this the Italian people and the intellectuals feel is a proof that the system like that in America can any day be utilised by a more clever, more intelligent person than Nixon to keep himself in power by simply confessing to some of the misdemeanours of his colleagues and getting rid of them and continuing as before.

There is also visible in the political circles here a faint, but an audible kind of a sigh of relief. Whatever the relationship between Italy and America, and, America and Europe and the great Atlantic Alliance, may have been in the past, in the last few years, the Italians especially, have been deeply "irritated" to say the least, by the way Kissinger and Nixon have been behaving towards Europe. I was told that often at the European meetings, in which the Americans participated, the feeling was, as if, the "headmaster" had come to reprimand the children for bad behaviour!! There has been here also a consistent feeling that America over-rides the national interests of Europe, economic as well as political, and goes behind and over their backs to do things with the Soviet Union, or with China, or, for that matter with the Arabs to secure only her own group and national interests.

It is hoped now that with the disappearance of Nixon and perhaps a certain more "democratic" control over the actions of Kissinger Europe may have a better chance of "survival" and of expressing and following her own interests and her own policies vis-a-vis her neighbours and vis-a-vis the Soviet Union.

There is always a contradiction and conflict in Italy, and, perhaps other European countries in their approach towards America. They want America at one and the same time to pay and protect them from the so-called Russian danger as well as to leave them alone to pursue

their own national interests which they now feel are often not in the same line as that of America.

In any case, it is felt here now, that, may be the "contradictions" in the interests of America and the European countries could now be smoothed out more easily with the disappearance of Nixon. Nixon in his power mania was, it is felt here, pushing Europe too fast on a path strewn with dangerous debris of national interests and dictatorial hegemonies.

The Turkish-Greek conflict in Cyprus has also brought to the forefront, in the eyes of the Italians, at this very moment the weakness of the American policy especially that of Kissinger. It is taken for granted here that Kissinger encouraged the Turks to get their cake and eat it whilst the going was good. He in fact is accepted here as the "counsellor" of Turkish invasion of Cyprus. Italians feel that Kissinger may be brilliant and deserving a Nobel Peace Prize dealing with "Macrocosmic" conflicts but that he is lost when dealing with "Microcosmic" ones such as in Cyprus. This is the more charitable view. The other one is that Kissinger only does what is in the interest of America which he equates with "World Peace". Interests of other countries to him and to America, many Italians feel, are not part of the pattern of peace that has to be slowly, painstakingly constructed bit by bit. They show the failure of Kissinger to deal with EEC or NATO as an example. Kissinger has no patience or time for "small countries", or, when vital American interests are not challenged.

The Italians are very greatly concerned by the Greek action in getting themselves out of NATO though at the present moment Greeks have only stated that they will withdraw their troops from the NATO organisation. The Italians fear that the whole NATO structure has been seriously, perhaps irreparably, damaged as a result of the American policy vis-a-vis Greece and Turkey. The original involvement of CIA in Greece and their support of the previous dictatorial regime of the Army and now their lack of support for the democratic forces has opened the eyes of many a political parties in Italy and they wonder as to whether when the crunch comes the American support will be available to them either.

This is just a short analysis of the situation seen by the Italians whilst they are on their holidays. There will be much more discussion and analysis of the situation in time to come. I will comment upon it again.

Yours sincerely,

A. B. Pant
(A. B. Pant)

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Shri V.C. Trivedi,
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Extra copy for Ambassador's
personal record.