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FM ATHENS 011120Z APR 85

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 188 OF 1 APRIL

INFO SAVING BONN, BRUSSELS, COPENHAGEN, THE HAGUE, LUXEMBOURG,
PARIS, ROME, DUBLIN, UKREP BRUSSELS, UKDEL NATO,
WASHINGTON, UKMIS NEW YORK, ANKARA, NICOSIA,
LISBON AND MADRID.

MY TELEGRAM NO 183: GREEK POLITICS.

SUMMARY.

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1. SARTZETAKIS WAS SWORN IN AS PRESIDENT ON 30TH MARCH. HE RECEIVED REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL MAJOR GREEK INSTITUTIONS AND FOREIGN AMBASSADORS ON 31 MARCH WHEN HE HANDED OVER THE QUEEN'S MESSAGE. NEW DEMOCRACY WERE ABSENT FROM BOTH OCCASIONS.

2. PAPANDREOU HINTS AT EARLY ELECTIONS AND TAKES THE LINE THAT NEW DEMOCRACY ARE UNDERMINING THE INSTITUTIONS OF THE STATE BY THEIR BOYCOTT OF THE PRESIDENT. IMPOSSIBLE TO BE SURE OF THE EFFECT ON PUBLIC OPINION OF RECENT EVENTS AND IN PARTICULAR ON VOTERS OF THE CENTRE. PASOK MAY NOT HAVE LOST SUBSTANTIALLY. THE MORE LIKELY OPTION SEEMS EARLY ELECTIONS: BUT THESE COULD PROBABLY NOT BE HELD BEFORE 9 JUNE GIVEN PAPANDREOU'S INTENTION TO PUT THROUGH CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS.

DETAIL.

3. THE CEREMONY AT WHICH SARTZETAKIS WAS SWORN IN AT THE PARLIAMENT ON 30 MARCH WAS NOTABLE FOR THE ABSENCE OF MEMBERS OF NEW DEMOCRACY. PASOK, THE COMMUNISTS AND INDEPENDENTS WERE ALL PRESENT. FOREIGN AMBASSADORS WERE INVITED TO ATTEND. MOST (INCLUDING MYSELF) DID. THERE WAS A PASOK ORGANISED CROWD OUTSIDE THE PARLIAMENT TO CHEER SARTZETAKIS.

4. ON 31 MARCH SARTZETAKIS RECEIVED REPRESENTATIVES OF POLITICAL PARTIES (WITH THE EXCEPTION OF NEW DEMOCRACY) AND OTHER GREEK INSTITUTIONS AS WELL AS FOREIGN AMBASSADORS. IT WAS A BRIEF CEREMONY. HE HANDED OVER THE QUEEN'S MESSAGE TO SARTZETAKIS' DIPLOMATIC ADVISER WHO IMMEDIATELY TOLD THE PRESIDENT. WHEN HE GREETED SARTZETAKIS HE SAID THAT HE HAD THE MESSAGE AND WOULD BE REPLYING. HE WAS OBVIOUSLY PLEASED TO HAVE RECEIVED IT. OF THE OTHER MESSAGES FROM HEADS OF STATE THAT FROM THE SUPREME SOVIET PRESIDENT HAS BEEN GIVEN MUCH PUBLICITY AS HAVE THOSE FROM PRESIDENT KYPRIANOU OF CYPRUS AND A MESSAGE FROM ARAFAT. THE ONLY OTHER MESSAGE FROM A EUROPEAN COMMUNITY HEAD OF STATE SO FAR PUBLICISED IS THAT FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL GERMAN REPUBLIC.

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5. PAPANDEOU IN COMMENTS TO THE PRESS IN THE AEROPLANE RETURNING FROM THE BRUSSELS EC SUMMIT CRITICISED THE ATTITUDE OF NEW DEMOCRACY AS 'ANTINATIONAL'. HE REMINDED JOURNALISTS THAT, THOUGH PASOK VOTED NEITHER FOR PRESIDENTS TSATSOS NOR KARAMANLIS, THEY HAD NEVER CAST DOUBT ON THE LEGALITY OF THESE ELECTIONS. WHAT NEW DEMOCRACY WERE DOING WAS MORE APPROPRIATE TO A 'GROUP OF ANARCHISTS' THAN A RESPONSIBLE POLITICAL PARTY.

6. HE WAS ASKED ABOUT HIS STATEMENT THAT THE VERDICT OF THE PEOPLE ON WHAT HAD BEEN DONE 'WOULD COME SOON'. HE SAID THAT THE PRESIDENT MUST TAKE ANY DECISION ON EARLY ELECTIONS. THE GOVERNMENT MUST FIRST PUT THROUGH THEIR PROPOSALS FOR CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT AND SECONDLY EITHER THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION OR HE HIMSELF MUST PROPOSE ELECTIONS FOR 'NATIONAL REASONS'. HE ADDED THAT POSSIBLY HIS VIEWS AND THOSE OF MITSOTAKIS COULD COINCIDE IN THIS RESPECT: BUT ELECTIONS COULD NOT BE CALLED ON ANY OTHER GROUND THAN THOSE WHICH HE HAD CITED.

COMMENT.

7. THE FEELING IS GROWING THAT, BY THEIR BOYCOTT OF SARTZETAKIS, NEW DEMOCRACY MAY BE PAINTING THEMSELVES INTO A CORNER. THEIR MOTION OF NO CONFIDENCE IN THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE PARLIAMENT (PARAGRAPH 7 OF MY TELEGRAM 180) IS LIKELY TO BE A NON-EVENT GIVEN PASOK'S MAJORITY. THEIR INSISTENCE ON CONTINUING TO REFER TO ALEVRAS AS THE ACTING PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC CUTS LITTLE ICE OUTSIDE THEIR OWN SUPPORTERS. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THEY MAY TRY TO DISPUTE IN THE COURTS ACTIONS (E.G. SIGNATURE OF LEGISLATION) BY SARTZETAKIS. BUT THIS WOULD NOT BE LIKELY TO GET FAR: THE COURTS ARE IN ANY CASE UNDER POLITICAL INFLUENCE. PAPANDEOU, IN THE TONE OF THE MAGNANIMOUS VICTOR, HAS SAID THAT IT IS THE PERFECT RIGHT OF NEW DEMOCRACY TO CALL A DEMONSTRATION ON 5 APRIL: THE GOVERNMENT WILL ENSURE THAT THIS RECEIVES SUITABLE PUBLICITY. BUT, HE SAID, NEW DEMOCRACY MUST REALISE THAT THEIR ACTION IS 'POLITICAL SUICIDE'.

8. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND AND GIVEN PASOK'S APPARENT RELISH OF 'VICTORY', EARLY ELECTIONS SEEM LIKELY, THOUGH THE TIMETABLE FOR PARLIAMENTARY CONSIDERATION OF PAPANDEOU'S CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS AND FOR THE EASTER HOLIDAYS SEEMS TO MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THESE TO BE HELD BEFORE SUNDAY 9 JUNE. THERE ARE THOSE WHO ARGUE THAT PAPANDEOU WOULD PREFER TO HOLD ON UNTIL THE AUTUMN TO LET THE DUST SETTLE AND REDUCE HIS LIKELY LOSSES RESULTING FROM SHOCK OF CENTRE VOTERS AT RECENT EVENTS. RESENTMENT AT THE SPEED AND MANNER IN WHICH THINGS HAVE BEEN HANDLED CANNOT BE DISMISSED. SOME CENTRE VOTERS WILL WITHDRAW SUPPORT FROM PASOK. BUT WE CANNOT ASSESS THE LIKELY NUMBER: AND THE GENERAL GREEK ELECTORATE (EXCLUDING THE FEW

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MATURE AND WELL-EDUCATED) DISPLAYS A HARDY CYNICISM TOWARDS THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE PARLIAMENT. THEY DO NOT EXPECT POLITICS TO BE MUCH INFLUENCED BY MORAL PRINCIPLES.

9. FCO PLEASE PASS TO ALL SAVING ADDRESSEES.

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REPEATED AS REQUESTED

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