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LUXEMBOURG, PARIS, ROME, THE HAGUE
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AGRICULTURE COUNCIL: GERMAN PRESS

SUMMARY

1. GERMAN PRESS REGARD KIECHLE'S INVOCATION OF THE LUXEMBOURG COMPROMISE AS A DEFEAT FOR GERMAN EUROPEAN POLICY. THEY SHOW LITTLE SYMPATHY FOR THE FARMERS, BUT UNDERSTANDING FOR KIECHLE'S DIFFICULT POLITICAL POSITION AT HOME.

DETAIL

2. THE REGIONAL AND NATIONAL GERMAN PAPERS AGREE THAT KIECHLE'S NEGOTIATING TACTICS, WHILE REPRESENTING A (TEMPORARY) VICTORY FOR THE GERMAN FARMING LOBBY, AMOUNT TO A HEAVY DEFEAT FOR THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND A LOSS OF CREDIBILITY FOR BONN'S EUROPEAN POLICY. MOST EDITORS POINT OUT THE INCONSISTENCY OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S POSITION: THE GERMANS HAD BEEN AMONG THE MOST ACTIVE PROPONENTS OF BUDGET DISCIPLINE AND AGRICULTURAL REFORM. AND KOHL HAD TAKEN A PERSONAL STAND IN FAVOUR OF MAJORITY VOTING AS AN ESSENTIAL CONSTITUENT OF A STRONGER EUROPE. YET KIECHLE, WITH THE FULL BACKING OF KOHL AND HIS CABINET, HAD CHOSEN THE MONTH BEFORE THE MILAN EUROPEAN COUNCIL FOR THE GERMANS TO INVOKE THE LUXEMBOURG COMPROMISE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ITS 20 YEAR EXISTENCE. THE STUTTGARTER ZEITUNG, ECHOING CRITICISMS MADE BY SPD, SUGGEST THAT ARMS CONTROL AND REDUCING UNEMPLOYMENT ARE VITAL GERMAN INTERESTS, NOT CEREAL PRICES. SOME EDITORS DRAW PARALLELS BETWEEN THE PRICE-FIXING AND OTHER AREAS WHERE BONN HAS IRRITATED ITS EUROPEAN PARTNERS THROUGH LACK OF GOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION, EG ENVIRONMENT, EC BUDGET, GATT, SDI, EUREKA. OTHERS REPORT THE US ADMINISTRATION'S PLANS FOR EXPORT SUBSIDY THROUGH PAYMENTS-IN-KIND, AND WARN THAT KIECHLE IS STORING UP TROUBLE FOR THE COMMUNITY: STADLMANN IN THE FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE SEES THE PRICE-FIXING AS A CRUCIAL TEST OF STRENGTH BETWEEN DELORS' COMMISSION AND KIECHLE.

3. THERE IS A CONSPICUOUS ABSENCE OF SYMPATHY IN THE NATIONAL PRESS FOR THE FARMERS OR FOR THEIR CLAIM THAT A CUT IN CEREAL PRICES WOULD

BE INTOLERABLE. THE PRESS DOES HOWEVER SHOW SYMPATHY FOR KIECHLE'S POLITICAL DILEMMA. ERTL HAD ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO BRING HOME BENEFITS FOR THE FARMERS. KIECHLE HAD HAD TO TAKE OFFICE JUST AS THE TIDE WAS TURNING. HE HAD BROUGHT NOTHING BUT BAD NEWS FROM BRUSSELS TO A FARMING POPULATION WHICH HIS PREDECESSORS HAD NOT PREPARED FOR THE CHANGE. HE WAS NOW FIGHTING FOR HIS POLITICAL EXISTENCE. THE BILD ZEITUNG CITES STRAUSS: 'OUR EC PARTNERS MUST UNDERSTAND THAT SINCE THE HUGE LOSSES AMONG FARMING VOTERS IN THE NORTH-RHINE WESTPHALIA ELECTIONS, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS ITS BACK TO THE WALL. COMPARED WITH THIS IT IS OF LESSER IMPORTANCE WHETHER THE MILAN COUNCIL IS A SUCCESS OR A FAILURE. OUR PARTNERS WOULD BE WELL ADVISED TO TAKE A POSSIBLE VETO SERIOUSLY. AFTER ALL, WE GERMANS PAY MOST IN THE EC.'

4. STRAUSS IS REPORTED TO HAVE TOLD KIECHLE TO ACCEPT NOTHING ON CEREAL PRICES 'WHICH DID NOT HAVE A ZERO BEFORE THE DECIMAL POINT'. HANDELSBLATT REPORTS THAT THE COMMISSION, AT BRITISH REQUEST, HAS CONFIRMED THAT ITS NEW CEREALS PROPOSALS WILL BE NEUTRAL IN THEIR EFFECT ON THE BUDGET. DIE WELT SAYS THAT IT WAS THE BRITISH, WITH AN EYE ON MILAN, WHO INSISTED THAT KIECHLE COME CLEAN ABOUT WHETHER HE WAS INVOKING THE LUXEMBOURG COMPROMISE.

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