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TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 209 OF 14 MARCH 1983

INFO SAVING TO ATHENS, BONN, BRUSSELS, COPENHAGEN, DUBLIN, THE HAGUE, LUXEMBOURG, ROME, UKREP BRUSSELS, UKDEL STRASBOURG, CONSULS GENERAL FRANCE.

MY TEL NO 200: FRENCH MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

MT

## SUMMARY

1. IN THE SECOND ROUND OF THE FRENCH MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS ON 13 MARCH A RECORD TURN-OUT OF 79.71% HELPED THE LEFT TO LIMIT ITS LOSSES TO 30 TOWNS OF MORE THAN 30,000 POPULATION, A RESULT WIDELY REGARDED BEFORE THE ELECTIONS AS THE THRESHOLD BETWEEN SUCCESS AND FAILURE. BUT THE LEFT'S UNEXPECTED COMEBACK IN THE SECOND ROUND HAS NOT STILLED SPECULATION ABOUT EARLY CHANGES IN BOTH POLICY AND THE COMPOSITION OF THE GOVERNMENT. THE NEXT MOVE IS UP TO MITTERRAND.

## DETAIL

2. IN THE SECOND ROUND THE LEFT LOST A FURTHER 14 TOWNS OF MORE THAN 30,000 POPULATION TO ADD TO THEIR LOSSES OF 16 IN THE FIRST ROUND. (THE FIGURE OF 15 SECOND ROUND LOSSES IN TODAY'S LE MONDE INCLUDES ONE TOWN WHOSE POPULATION NO LONGER EXCEEDS 30,000). TAKING INTO ACCOUNT MME CRESSON'S VICTORY IN CHATELLERAULT, THE LEFT HAVE SUFFERED A NET LOSS OF 29 TOWNS OVER THE TWO ROUNDS. OVERALL THE LEFT NOW CONTROL 120 AND THE OPPOSITION 100 OF THE LARGER TOWNS. ALL THOSE MINISTERS WHO WERE INCUMBENT MAYORS BUT HAD FAILED TO SECURE OUTRIGHT ELECTION IN THE FIRST ROUND MANAGED TO SQUEEZE HOME, INCLUDING DEFFERRE (MARSEILLES) AND CHEVENEMENT (BELFORT) WHO ON PAPER LOOKED BEATEN. DELORS AND BEREGOVY WERE ALSO ELECTED. THE ONLY CASUALTIES OF NOTE IN THE SECOND ROUND WERE PONTILLON (PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH SECTION OF THE FRANCO/ BRITISH COUNCIL), JOXE (LEADER OF THE SOCIALIST PARLIAMENTARY GROUP) AND QUILES (SOCIALIST PARTY (PS) CANDIDATE FOR MAYOR OF PARIS AND NUMBER THREE IN THE PARTY HIERARCHY). THE LEFT'S LOSSES WERE EVENLY DIVIDED BETWEEN THE SOCIALISTS AND THE COMMUNISTS (PCF). BUT THE SOCIALISTS WERE MORE SUCCESSFUL IN HANGING ON TO THEIR MARGINAL TOWNS. FURTHERMORE, THE COMMUNISTS HAVE LOST THREE OUT OF THE SIX TOWNS OF MORE THAN 100,000 WHICH THEY PREVIOUSLY CONTROLLED. THE COMMUNISTS HAVE COMPLAINED THAT THEIR CANDIDATES DID NOT RECEIVE ADEQUATE SUPPORT FROM SOCIALIST VOTERS IN THE SECOND ROUND. THE OPPOSITION DID BEST IN THE LARGEST TOWNS. CHIRAC COMPLETED HIS CLEAN SWEEP OF ALL THE PARIS ARRONDISSEMENTS (BOROUGH), A PERFORMANCE MATCHED BY THE GISCARDIAN MAYOR OF LYONS. THE OPPOSITION NOW CONTROL 24 OUT OF FRANCE'S 36 TOWNS OF MORE THAN

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100,000 POPULATION (A GAIN OF 7). WITHIN THE OPPOSITION THE GAULLIST RPR (+17) GAINED GROUND FROM A LOWER BASE ON THE GISCARDIAN UDF (+7). THE RPR AND THE UDF NOW EACH CONTROL 40 TOWNS OF MORE THAN 30,000 POPULATION.

3. THE LEFT'S SUCCESS IN LIMITING THEIR NET LOSS TO 29 TOWNS RESULTED FROM A SIGNIFICANT SHIFT IN THE SECOND ROUND VOTING PATTERN. WHEREAS IN THE FIRST ROUND THE OPPOSITION WON 54% OF THE VOTE IN THE LARGER TOWNS, ON 13 MARCH LEFT AND RIGHT SPLIT THE SECOND ROUND VOTE 50-50. IN SEVERAL TOWNS THE LEFT SCRAPED HOME WITH PAPER-THIN MAJORITIES. THE LEFT'S STRATEGY BETWEEN ROUNDS WAS TO APPEAL TO LEFT-WING ABSTENTIONISTS TO VOTE IN THE SECOND ROUND. THIS APPEARS TO HAVE PAID OFF. THE RECORD TURNOUT CLEARLY BENEFITED THE LEFT. ESTIMATES SUGGEST THAT OF THOSE WHO VOTED FOR THE FIRST TIME YESTERDAY 60% SUPPORTED THE LEFT. ECOLOGIST VOTERS ALSO APPEAR TO HAVE RALLIED TO THE LEFT.

4. THE SECOND ROUND RESULTS HAVE COME AS A GREAT RELIEF TO THE LEFT. THE LEFT'S LEADERS ACCEPT THAT IN THE FIRST ROUND THE ELECTORATE WANTED TO SOUND A WARNING NOTE TO THE GOVERNMENT. BUT <sup>THAT IN</sup> THEY CLAIM THE SECOND ROUND THE ELECTORATE DEMONSTRATED THAT IT HAD NO LOVE FOR THE OPPOSITION. JOSPIN (FIRST SECRETARY OF THE PS) SAID LAST NIGHT THAT IT WAS NOW UP TO THE GOVERNMENT TO LEARN A LESSON FROM THE RESULTS. HE ARGUED THAT THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD CONTINUE ITS PRESENT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICIES WHICH WERE BEGINNING TO BEAR FRUIT. BUT IT SHOULD INTERVENE RAPIDLY AND FIRMLY IN THOSE AREAS - THE TRADE DEFICIT AND FRANCE'S INDEBTEDNESS - WHERE ITS POLICIES HAD NOT SUCCEEDED. IN SO DOING THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT ABANDON ITS PURSUIT OF GREATER SOCIAL JUSTICE. ANY NEW MEASURES SHOULD BE SELECTIVE AND GEARED TO RELATIVE MEANS. MARCHAIS (SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE PCF) HAS ALSO INTERPRETED THE ELECTIONS AS A WARNING TO THE GOVERNMENT. HE HAS CALLED ON THE GOVERNMENT TO TACKLE MORE RESOLUTELY THE PROBLEMS OF UNEMPLOYMENT AND REAL WAGES. TODAY'S L'HUMANITE, THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S DAILY, URGES THE GOVERNMENT TO STICK BY ITS ELECTION PROMISES IF IT WISHES TO MAINTAIN THE CONFIDENCE OF THOSE WHO VOTED FOR THE LEFT IN 1981. THERE IS NO SUGGESTION HOWEVER, THAT THE COMMUNISTS ARE CONTEMPLATING WITHDRAWAL OF THEIR SUPPORT FROM THE GOVERNMENT.

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5. SOCIALIST LEADERS HAVE HINTED THAT MITTERRAND WILL REACT QUICKLY TO THE ELECTION RESULTS. HE RECEIVED MAUROY FOR TWO HOURS THIS MORNING BUT NOTHING HAS FILTERED OUT ABOUT THEIR CONVERSATION. EVEN THOUGH THE LEFT RECOVERED IN THE SECOND ROUND, RUMOURS OF AN IMMINENT GOVERNMENT RESHUFFLE ARE RIFE. MAUROY'S POSITION MAY HAVE BEEN REINFORCED BY THE LEFT'S BETTER SHOWING IN THE SECOND ROUND BUT THE BETTING IS STILL ON HIS EARLY, IF NOT IMMEDIATE, DEPARTURE. IF HE GOES, DELORS FOLLOWED BY BEREGOVY ARE THE CURRENT FAVOURITES TO SUCCEED HIM. ALTERNATIVELY, MITTERRAND MAY TURN TO A HITHERTO UNKNOWN, APOLITICAL TECHNOCRAT - A SOCIALIST EQUIVALENT OF POMPIDOU OR BARRE. WHATEVER CHANGES ARE MADE, CHEYSSON IS AMONG THOSE MINISTERS LESS LIKELY TO BE AFFECTED.

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FRETWELL

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THIS TELEGRAM  
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