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TELEGRAM NUMBER 376 OF 6 MAY

INFO PRIORITY BONN, WASHINGTON, ROME.

INFO SAVING TOKYO, OTTAWA, UKDEL NATO, MOSCOW

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MY TELNO 369: BONN SUMMIT: FRENCH REACTIONS

SUMMARY

1. THE VERDICTS ON MITTERRAND'S PERFORMANCE HAVE BEEN MIXED. HIS DOUBLE DEFIANCE OF THE US ON THE GATT AND SDI GIVES SATISFACTION TO MANY, BUT IT IS SLIGHTLY TARNISHED BY THE REALISATION THAT HE THEREBY DRAMATISED THE DISARRAY AMONG EUROPEANS AND EXPOSED THE LIMITS OF THE BONN-PARIS AXIS.

DETAIL

2. MOST COMMENTATORS AGREE THAT MITTERRAND BAULKED ON GATT AND SDI AT LEAST PARTLY OUT OF A WISH TO SCORE POINTS WITH THE FRENCH ELECTORATE FOR STANDING UP TO THE US. WHILE IN A FEW CASES REGRETTING THAT HE HAS ENCOURAGED PROTECTIONISTS AT HOME AND AGGRAVATED THOSE IN THE US, COMMENTATORS RECKON THAT MITTERRAND'S GAULLIST BEHAVIOUR WILL HAVE EVOKED WIDESPREAD KNEE-JERK APPROVAL IN THE COUNTRY AT LARGE.

3. ON THE RIGHT, THE RPL HAS TAKEN UP A TRADITIONAL STANCE. CHIRAC HAS REFERRED TO THE PROPOSED GATT ROUND AS A NEGOTIATION WHICH FRANCE HAS NO INTEREST TO ENTER, BECAUSE SHE WILL NOT HAVE THE POWER TO IMPOSE HER INTERESTS. HE GRUDGINGLY AGREED WITH MITTERRAND'S STAND OVER THE DATE AND WAS REDUCED TO QUESTIONING HIS AGGRESSIVE STYLE.

4. WHETHER APPROVING OR DISAPPROVING OF MITTERRAND, COMMENTATORS ALSO AGREE THAT THE MAIN CASUALTIES IN BONN WERE THE FRANCO-GERMAN ENTENTE AND BY EXTENSION THE CAUSE OF EUROPEAN UNITY. SOME OPPOSITION SPOKESMEN BLAMED MITTERRAND FOR TAKING HIS TACTICS SO FAR THAT HE FAILED TO CARRY THE GERMANS AND OTHER EUROPEANS WITH HIM, BUT THERE IS ALSO GENUINE DISAPPOINTMENT THAT WHEN FORCED TO CHOOSE BETWEEN THE US AND EUROPE THE GERMANS AGAIN CHOSE THE US. WHERE, IT IS ASKED, DOES THIS LEAVE THE PARIS-BONN AXIS AND THE PROSPECTS FOR MILAN? SEVERAL COMMENTATORS CONSOLE THEMSELVES, HOWEVER, WITH THE THOUGHT THAT KOHL MAY NOW PAY A HIGH PRICE IN TERMS OF SUPPORT FOR MITTERRAND'S IDEAS ON THE INSTITUTIONAL REFORM OF THE COMMUNITY TO ASSUAGE HIS DISPLEASURE AT BEING LEFT ISOLATED ON GATT AND SDI.

5. WHILE THE GENERAL IMPRESSION HERE AS ELSEWHERE IS THAT MITTERRAND HAS SAID NO TO THE US ON PARTICIPATION IN SDI, THE POSITION DOES NOT SEEM IN REALITY QUITE SO CLEAR-CUT. MITTERRAND'S REMARKS AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE IN BONN WERE HEAVILY QUALIFIED. HE SAID THAT FRANCE WOULD NOT PARTICIPATE AS THE US PROPOSITION STOOD AT THE MOMENT: IT WAS TOO VAGUE. HE WAS INTERESTED IN SDI TECHNOLOGY, AND WHILE HAVING DOUBTS ABOUT SDI STRATEGY THOUGHT THAT IN THE LONG RUN SPACE COULD NOT BE LEFT OUT OF STRATEGY. HE DISLIKED THE TERM SUB-CONTRACTING WHICH HE HAD HEARD ON AMERICAN LIPS: EUROPEANS NEEDED THEIR OWN MAJOR PROJECT WHICH NEED NOT, HOWEVER, BE INCOMPATIBLE WITH SDI: THERE MIGHT BE LINKS BETWEEN THE TWO. HE APPARENTLY DUCKED A QUESTION AS

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TO WHETHER THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT WOULD PREVENT FRENCH COMPANIES ACCEPTING US CONTRACTS, NOT SURPRISINGLY IN VIEW OF LE MONDE'S DISCLOSURE ON 5 MAY THAT THOMSON CSF AND CILAS WERE NEGOTIATING WITH THE US ON LASERS AND LASER-REFLECTING MIRRORS RESPECTIVELY. LES ECHES (BUSINESS DAILY) QUOTES OFFICIAL SOURCES AS SAYING THAT FRENCH FIRMS WILL BE GIVEN PAROLE TO TALK TO THE AMERICANS, AND RESTRICTIONS WOULD ONLY APPLY IN SECTORS IDENTIFIED AMONG EUROPEANS FOR COLLABORATION AMONG THEMSELVES.

6. IN VIEW OF THE PREOCCUPATION WITH WHAT IS SEEN AS GERMANY'S DEFAULT, BRITAIN ESCAPES RELATIVELY LIGHTLY. THERE ARE NUMEROUS REFERENCES, HOWEVER, TO AN ALLEGED ANGLO-SAXON FRONT IN BONN AND TO MRS THATCHER'S LACK OF ENTHUSIASM FOR THE COMMON AGRICULTURAL POLICY.

COMMENT

7. MITTERRAND'S INTRANSIGENCE MAY HAVE TAKEN SOME OF HIS OFFICIALS, AT LEAST, BY SURPRISE. HE HIMSELF WAS CERTAINLY TAKEN ABACK BY KOHL'S PUBLICLY EXPRESSED SUPPORT FOR REAGAN ON GATT EVEN BEFORE THE SUMMIT FORMALLY OPENED. I BELIEVE THAT HE HAD ALWAYS INTENDED A DEGREE OF CONFRONTATION WITH REAGAN, PREFERABLY IN LESS STARK ISOLATION, THE RAPIDITY OF KOHL'S ANNOUNCEMENT MAY HAVE LED HIM TO HARDEN HIS STAND. IT IS QUITE CLEAR THAT THIS STAND WAS DETERMINED PRINCIPALLY BY DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN HOW FAR HE IS PREPARED TO GO IN INCURRING THE RISK OF AGGRAVATING US PROTECTIONISM AND OF DIVIDING THE COMMUNITY IN ORDER TO PROTECT HIS POLITICAL FLANK. HE WILL NOT NOW FIND IT EASY TO WITHDRAW FROM THIS POSE OF GAULLIST DEFIANCE AND MAY EVEN HOPE TO AVOID GIVING ANY COMMITMENT TO A NEW ROUND BEFORE THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS NEXT MARCH. HE WILL CERTAINLY GIVE HIS OFFICIALS A HARD-LINE MANDATE FOR THE NEGOTIATION ON THE AGENDA.

8. SEE MIFT.

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