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HOUSTON SUMMIT : FRENCH PRESS REACTION ms

SUMMARY

1. MUTED SATISFACTION AT COMPROMISE RESULTS ACHIEVED THANKS TO CONCESSIONS BY ALL PARTIES. SUMMIT SEEN AS CONFIRMING DECLINE OF WORLDWIDE US LEADERSHIP WITH AFFIRMATION OF DISTINCT EUROPEAN PERSONALITY AND A TENDANCY FOR POWERS TO CONCENTRATE ON THEIR OWN REGIONAL PREOCCUPATIONS. SOME FAVOURABLE COMMENT ON THE UK ROLE.

DETAIL

2. FRENCH PRESS COVERAGE IN PREPARATION FOR THE SUMMIT CONCENTRATED ON THE FACT THAT THIS TIME THERE WERE MAJOR DIFFERENCES OF PRIORITY AND PERSPECTIVE AMONG THE PARTICIPANTS AND ULTIMATE FAILURE TO AGREE ON IMPORTANT ISSUES SUCH AS AID FOR THE USSR, AGRICULTURAL SUBSIDIES AND THE EASING OF RESTRICTIONS ON CHINA COULD NOT BE RULED OUT.

3. THE RESULTS ARE GIVEN A MUTED AND CAUTIOUS WELCOME AS REPRESENTING HARD FOUGHT COMPROMISES WHICH GIVE ALL PARTICIPANTS AT LEAST THE MINIMUM FOR WHICH THEY WERE PREPARED TO SETTLE ON THE ISSUES OF REAL IMPORTANCE TO THEM. DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE FAILURE TO AGREE ON IMMEDIATE CONCERTED AID FOR THE SOVIET UNION AND CONCERN AT THE POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS OF THE AGREEMENT ON AGRICULTURAL SUBSIDIES ARE GLOSSED OVER IN FAVOUR OF AN INTERPRETATION ACCORDING TO WHICH THIS SUMMIT MARKS THE END OF AN AGE IN WHICH THE US WERE ABLE TO EXERT DETERMINING LEADERSHIP. MITTERRAND'S CLAIM THAT THE SUMMIT REPRESENTED A NEW ASSERTION OF EUROPEAN IDENTITY IS PICKED UP AND SERVES PARTLY TO OBSCURE THE DOMINANT ROLE PLAYED BY GERMANY. A TENDANCY FOR EACH POWER TO CONCENTRATE ON ITS OWN REGIONAL PREOCCUPATIONS AND TO BE ACCORDED FREEDOM OF MANOEUVRE THERE IS ALSO NOTED, WITH GERMANY FREE TO PROVIDE BILATERAL AID TO THE SOVIET UNION IN ADVANCE OF THE FINDINGS OF THE AGREED STUDY.

4. EARLY REPORTS TO THE EFFECT THAT ON THE BIG ISSUES THE UK WAS CLOSER TO JAPAN AND THE US THAN TO HER EUROPEAN PARTNERS FADED OUT AS THE SUMMIT PROGRESSED. SOME LATER REPORTS REFERRED FAVOURABLY TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S ROLE IN WORKING FOR A COMPROMISE ON GATT AGRICULTURE.

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