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INFO ROUTINE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY POSTS

FRAME GENERAL

MEETING OF SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVES, 30 OCTOBER 1990

PRESIDENCY HANDLING OF THE ROME EUROPEAN COUNCIL

SUMMARY

1. SOME HELPFUL (TO US) CHIDING OF THE PRESIDENCY FOR RUSHING ITS FENCES IN ROME. I SPOKE TO FCO TELNO 328 AND CIRCULATED A SPEAKING NOTE. FRANCE AND BELGIUM REGRETTED THAT MORE EFFORT HAD NOT BEEN MADE TO ACHIEVE CONSENSUS. NETHERLANDS COMPLAINED THAT A TEXTUAL CHANGE REQUESTED BY VAN DEN BROEK, AND ALLEGEDLY AGREED BY THE PRESIDENCY, WAS THEN NOT INCORPORATED. FOR DISCUSSION OF FUTURE WORK ON INSTITUTIONAL REFORM SEE MIFT.

DETAIL

2. I SPOKE TO FCO TELNO 328, EXPRESSING YOUR SURPRISE AND DISAPPOINTMENT AT THE WAY THE PRESIDENCY HAD TRIED TO ANTICIPATE IGC DISCUSSION AND EXPLAINING IN SOME DETAIL THE THINKING BEHIND OUR RESERVES. I CIRCULATED A SPEAKING NOTE (BY FAX TO ECD(I), FCO BASED ON PARAS 4 AND 5 OF TUR).

3. BOISSIEU (FRANCE) REGRETTED THE WAY THE COUNCIL HAD ENDED WITH A SERIES OF RESERVATIONS ON THE FINAL DOCUMENT. HE URGED CAUTION ON THE PRESIDENCY, LEST OVER-AMBITION RESULT IN TEXTS EMERGING WHICH FAILED TO REPRESENT GENUINE CONSENSUS AND ACCORDINGLY LACKED AUTHORITY. ALLOWING RESERVES INTO EUROPEAN COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS WAS BAD PRACTICE AND WOULD DEVALUE THE WORK OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL.

4. DI ROBERTO (PRESIDENCY) TRIED TO ARGUE THAT BOISSIEU'S COMMENTS MISSED THE POINT. THE UK HAD CHOSEN THE ROUTE OF ENTERING RESERVATIONS. DE SCHOUTHEETE (BELGIUM) THOUGHT IT

NONETHELESS A BAD PRECEDENT, WHICH THE PRESIDENCY WOULD BE WELL ADVISED NOT TO REPEAT. I POINTED OUT THAT IT HAD IN FACT BEEN THE PRESIDENCY WHICH HAD PROPOSED AGREEING A TEXT ACCEPTABLE TO ELEVEN, WITH RESERVATIONS FROM THE UK. WE WOULD HAVE PREFERRED A CONSENSUS TEXT WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN A FAR MORE POSITIVE APPROACH.

5. NIEMAN (NETHERLANDS) THOUGHT A NUMBER OF MISTAKES HAD BEEN MADE BY THE PRESIDENCY, ALTHOUGH HE NOTED THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO BE PRECISE GIVEN THE LACK OF CLEAR RULES OF PROCEDURE. HIS MINISTER HAD INSISTED ON THE DELETION OF THE SECOND SENTENCE ON PAGE 4 OF THE CONCLUSIONS (RELATING TO ADJUSTMENT OF THE TASKS OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL AND GENERAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL). THE PRESIDENCY HAD AGREED. YET IN THE FINAL TEXT THE SENTENCE STILL STOOD. THE NETHERLANDS WERE CONSIDERING WHETHER TO ENTER THEIR OWN RESERVATION ON THIS POINT, ALTHOUGH HE ACCEPTED THAT THESE WERE PRESIDENCY CONCLUSIONS WHICH, IN STRICT LEGAL TERMS, BOUND NOBODY.

6. AT DI ROBERTO'S REQUEST, ERSBOELL (SECRETARY GENERAL, COUNCIL) GAVE OUT HIS ACCOUNT OF THE EVENTS CITED BY NIEMAN. YOU HAD OBJECTED TO THE PASSAGE RELATING TO DEVELOPMENT OF QM, COMMISSION EXECUTIVE POWERS AND THE ECJ HAD BEEN DELETED AT YOUR REQUEST, SUPPORTED BY VAN DEN BROEK HAD REFERRED TO PROBLEMS WITH A LARGER PART OF THE TEXT BUT ANDREOTTI'S SUMMING UP HAD COVERED ONLY THE DELETION OF THE AREAS YOU HAD OPPOSED. NO-ONE HAD CHALLENGED THIS. DI ROBERTO ARGUED IN TURN THAT THE WORDING WAS ANYWAY FLEXIBLE ENOUGH TO SATISFY THE NETHERLANDS AND THEN THAT NIEMAN HAD SIMPLY GOT IT WRONG. NIEMAN INSISTED ON HIS UNDERSTANDING OF EVENTS AND RESERVED HIS POSITION ON TAKING IT UP MORE FORMALLY (WHILE HINTING STRONGLY THAT, HAVING MADE HIS POINT, HE WOULD NOT).

7. DE SCHOUTHEETE INTERVENED TO BRING DISCUSSION TO AN END BY NOTING, IN SUPPORT OF NIEMAN'S EARLIER COMMENT, THAT RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUCH TEXTS LAY WITH THE PRESIDENCY. DI ROBERTO CONCLUDED THAT IT WAS HELPFUL TO KNOW HOW COLLEAGUES FELT.

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