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FM PARIS 172240Z NOV 83

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 1052 OF 17TH NOVEMBER

INFO PRIORITY MODUK (DS17), WASHINGTON, BONN, UKDEL NATO, MOSCOW.

MIPT: MITTERRAND: EAST/WEST AND DEFENCE ISSUES.

INF.

1. MITTERRAND GAVE A CLASSIC EXPOSE OF THE CASE FOR WESTERN INF DEPLOYMENT. THE SS20S CREATED AN IMBALANCE IN FAVOUR OF THE RUSSIANS. IF NOT CORRECTED, THIS WOULD TEND TO DECOUPLE EUROPE FROM THE US, GIVE THE RUSSIANS A REGIONAL SUPERIORITY AND ALLOW THEM TO ACHIEVE GAINS BY INTIMIDATION WHICH THEY COULD ONLY OTHERWISE MAKE BY WAR.
2. MITTERRAND EXPECTED THE RUSSIANS TO BREAK OFF THE GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS AS SOON AS PERSHING WERE EFFECTIVELY DEPLOYED (HE SPOKE ALMOST DISMISSIVELY ABOUT CRUISE). HOWEVER, HE DID NOT EXPECT THE BREAK TO LAST LONG. IN THE POST-PERSHING SITUATION A BALANCE WAS NEEDED AT THE LOWEST POSSIBLE LEVEL AND BOTH SIDES WOULD NEED TO BE REASONABLE. HE (MITTERRAND) WOULD BE AVAILABLE TO MAKE PROPOSALS BUILDING ON THE GENEVA RUBBLE.
3. MITTERRAND GAVE THE PACIFISTS SHORT SHRIFT (THOUGH HIS LANGUAGE WAS MORE RESTRAINED THAN THAT OF SOME GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN RECENTLY). THEIR SUGGESTION OF A FREEZE WOULD MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE THE ESSENTIAL BALANCE OF FORCES IN THE WORLD. IT WOULD MEAN CRYSTALLISING A DANGEROUS SITUATION. NO DOUBT THERE WERE PEOPLE IN THE SOVIET UNION WHO WANTED PEACE BUT FOR THE MOMENT THE EAST WAS DEVELOPING ARMS WHILE THE WEST WAS DEVELOPING PACIFISM.
4. MITTERRAND WAS SCATHING ABOUT THE ARGUMENTS FOR INCLUSION OF FRENCH SYSTEMS AT GENEVA. THE 18 MISSILES IN SILOS ON THE PLATEAU D'ALBION COULD CONCEIVABLY BE REGARDED AS INTERMEDIATE BUT THE FRENCH SUBMARINES WERE PURELY STRATEGIC. IT WOULD BE RIDICULOUS FOR THE SUPER-POWERS TO NEGOTIATE ABOUT FRENCH SUBMARINES WHEN THEY WERE NOT EVEN NEGOTIATING ABOUT THEIR OWN. IN THE LONG TERM, AS MITTERRAND HAD SAID AT THE UN, FRANCE AS ONE OF THE FIVE NUCLEAR POWERS WOULD ALWAYS BE INTERESTED WHEN IT CAME TO TALKING SERIOUSLY ABOUT DISARMAMENT. BEFORE THAT POINT COULD BE REACHED, HOWEVER, THE SUPERPOWERS WOULD HAVE TO REDUCE "CONSIDERABLY" THE EVER-INCREASING NUMBER OF THEIR MISSILES. THERE WOULD ALSO HAVE TO BE REDUCTIONS IN CONVENTIONAL WEAPONRY, BIOLOGICAL AND CHEMICAL WEAPONS WOULD HAVE TO BE PROHIBITED AND RESEARCH ON ANTI-SUBMARINE, ANTI-MISSILE AND ANTI-SATELLITE WEAPONS WOULD ALL HAVE TO STOP.

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5. NONE OF THIS IS ORIGINAL. MITTERRAND DID, HOWEVER, SEEM TO BE SAYING SOMETHING NEW WHEN HE WELCOMED THE LATEST ANDROPOV PROPOSALS (MY TELNO 1047). HIS WORDS COULD BE READ IN MORE THAN ONE WAY BUT THE MOST OBVIOUS INTERPRETATION IS THAT TO MITTERRAND'S MIND, ANDROPOV'S COMING DOWN TO THE FIGURE OF 122, I.E. LESS THAN THE TOTAL NUMBER OF UK AND FRENCH MISSILES, REPRESENTED A WELCOME STEP AWAY FROM RUSSIAN INSISTENCE OF TAKING FULL ACCOUNT OF THIRD PARTY SYSTEMS. WE SHALL SEEK CLARIFICATION FROM THE QUAI.

EUROPEAN DEFENCE.

6. ON THIS MITTERRAND WAS STUDIOUSLY VAGUE. IT WAS A FINE IDEA IN PRINCIPLE. BUT BEFORE PROGRESS COULD BE MADE, EUROPE WOULD HAVE TO OVERCOME A NUMBER OF IMPORTANT OBSTACLES DERIVING FROM THE LAST WAR, NOTABLY GERMANY'S PROHIBITION FROM HAVING NUCLEAR WEAPONS. THE RUSSIANS WERE VERY VIGILANT ON THAT POINT AND THEY WERE NOT THE ONLY ONES. IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO MOVE FORWARD PRUDENTLY TO AVOID BUILDING ON SAND, CAUSING NEW EXPLOSIONS AND CONSECRATING THE YALTA CARVE-UP. THE IDEA OF JOINT EUROPEAN DEFENCE SHOULD BE KEPT IN MIND: BUT EUROPE SHOULD FIRST SETTLE ITS PRESENT PROBLEMS AND MAKE PROGRESS ON ARMS PROCUREMENT. THEN, OR PERHAPS EVEN NOW, IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO LOOK AT ''COMPLEMENTARY STRATEGIES''. FRANCE WAS ALREADY GOING DOWN THAT PATH: MITTERRAND HAD REVIVED THE MILITARY CLAUSE OF THE FRANCO-GERMAN TREATY AND ALSO ''OPENED MILITARY CONVERSATIONS WITH THOSE RESPONSIBLE IN BRITAIN''. FRANCE WAS ALSO NOW BUILDING UP A RAPID INTERVENTION FORCE WHICH COULD ACT IN GERMANY. BUT THERE WAS NO WAY IN WHICH FRANCE COULD ENSURE THE DEFENCE OF EUROPE.

7. IN DEFINING THE MISSION OF THE FRENCH DETERRENT MITTERRAND HAD SAID THAT IT WAS FOR THE PRESIDENT ALONE TO DECIDE WHETHER A PARTICULAR EXTERNAL THREAT DIRECTLY THREATENED FRANCE. THIS WAS AMBIGUOUS, HE ADMITTED, BUT IT HAD TO BE SO AS THE PRESIDENT HAD TO HAVE A CERTAIN FLEXIBILITY.

RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION.

8. WHILE TAKING AN ESSENTIALLY TOUGH LINE, MITTERRAND MADE SEVERAL POLITE GENUFLECTIONS IN THE RUSSIANS' DIRECTION. HE RULED OUT A MEETING WITH ANDROPOV PRIOR TO DEPLOYMENT OF PERSHING'S BUT DID NOT RULE IT OUT AFTERWARDS IF IT COULD HELP PEACE.

PETRIE
STANDARD
DEF D
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NAD

**THIS TELEGRAM
WAS NOT
ADVANCED**

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MR COLES NO10 DOWNING ST