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TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 646 OF 23 MAY

INFO PRIORITY UKREP BRUSSELS, UKDEL STRASBOURG

INFO SAVING ATHENS, BONN, BRUSSELS, COPENHAGEN, DUBLIN, THE HAGUE,  
LUXEMBOURG, ROME

EC: FRENCH VIEWS ON MAJORITY VOTING AND A EUROPEAN COUNCIL  
SECRETARIAT

SUMMARY

1. THERE ARE STRONG INDICATIONS THAT MITTERRAND WILL USE HIS SPEECH TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON 24 MAY TO ADVOCATE FRENCH VIEWS ON COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS, INCLUDING GREATER USE OF MAJORITY VOTING, AND PERHAPS POLITICAL UNION.

DETAIL

2. IN AN INTERVIEW WITH REGIONAL NEWSPAPERS PUBLISHED YESTERDAY, MITTERRAND AGAIN CALLED FOR MAJORITY VOTING TO BE USED FOR TAKING MOST DECISIONS IN THE COMMUNITY. DUMAS ALSO MADE A PITCH FOR THIS IN A SPEECH YESTERDAY. NEITHER REFERENCE WAS SET IN THE CONTEXT OF THE BUDGET ISSUE, NOR WAS ANY LINK IMPLIED WITH DIFFERENCES WITH THE UK. THE FRENCH HAVE BEEN ADVOCATING A MOVE IN THIS DIRECTION AT LEAST SINCE THE START OF THE YEAR, MOST NOTABLY IN MITTERRAND'S SPEECH IN THE HAGUE IN FEBRUARY.

3. A MEMBER OF THE DUMAS CABINET COMMENTED TO US TODAY THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOT CALLING IN QUESTION THE LUXEMBOURG COMPROMISE BUT SEEKING AN END TO ITS ABUSE. DECISION MAKING IN THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS HAD TOO OFTEN BEEN PARALYSED BY GOVERNMENTS INVOKING THE COMPROMISE ON QUESTIONS WHICH DID NOT INVOLVE TRULY MAJOR NATIONAL INTEREST. IN CONSEQUENCE, TOO MANY DECISIONS THAT SHOULD BE SETTLED IN THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS WERE BEING REFERRED UP TO THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, CLUTTERING ITS AGENDA WITH MATTERS OF SECONDARY IMPORTANCE. IF IT WAS ALREADY DIFFICULT TO REACH DECISIONS IN THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS IN A COMMUNITY OF 10, IT WOULD BECOME IMPOSSIBLE IN A COMMUNITY OF 12. MITTERRAND WOULD ARGUE THE CASE IN HIS SPEECH TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON 24 MAY.

4. IN SPEAKING TO THE BRITISH CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATION IN FRANCE ON 21 MAY, CHIRAC ALSO ARGUED FOR INCREASED USE OF MAJORITY VOTING IN THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS.

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5. IN HIS LUNCHEON SPEECH YESTERDAY, DUMAS ALSO REFERRED TO THE IDEA OF A PERMANENT SECRETARIAT TO PREPARE EUROPEAN COUNCIL MEETINGS, SAYING IT SHOULD FORM PART OF THE SECRETARIAT OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, WORKING TO AN ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL. IT SHOULD NOT BE COMPOSED OF SEPARATE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE 10 MEMBERS STATES: THERE WAS ROOM FOR DISCUSSION ABOUT THE ORGANISATION BUT HE PREFERRED SOMETHING FAIRLY LIGHT. CHIRAC ALSO ARGUED FOR A PERMANENT SECRETARIAT FOR THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL WHEN SPEAKING TO THE CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATION.

6. THERE ARE WIDESPREAD RUMOURS IN PARIS THAT MITTERRAND WILL REVIVE THE IDEA OF A EUROPEAN POLITICAL UNION EITHER IN HIS STRASBOURG SPEECH OR AT FONTAINEBLEAU. SOME SUGGEST THAT HE HAS ALREADY DISCUSSED WITH KOHL THE IDEA OF A PRELIMINARY FRANCO-GERMAN POLITICAL UNION. WHEN I ASKED BIANCO, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE ELYSEE, ABOUT THE SPEECH THIS MORNING HE WOULD SAY ONLY THAT MITTERRAND IS STILL WORKING ON THE TEXT. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT HE AIMS TO SPRING ONE OR TWO SURPRISES.

7. MOREL (ELYSEE) HAS CONFIRMED TO US THAT MITTERRAND DISCUSSED INSTITUTIONAL ASPECTS OF THE COMMUNITY WHEN THEY MET ON 20 MAY. IN HIS PRESS INTERVIEW REFERRED TO ABOVE, HE REFERRED TO THE DECLARATION ON EUROPEAN UNION ADOPTED BY THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, RECALLED THAT HE HAD COMMENDED AS GOING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, AND SAID THAT PARLIAMENT HAVING FULFILLED ITS ROLE IT WAS NOW TIME FOR GOVERNMENTS TO PLAY THEIR PART.

8. IN THE SAME INTERVIEW, MITTERRAND DECLARED HIMSELF TO BE CAUTIOUSLY IN FAVOUR OF A MULTI-SPEED EUROPE, GIVING THE EMS, ARIANE AND AIRBUS AS EXAMPLES OF ITS APPLICATION, BUT INSISTING THAT THE TREATY OF ROME SHOULD CONTINUE TO BE RESPECTED AS THE ESSENTIAL FOUNDATION OF THE COMMUNITY.

FCO PASS SAVING ADDRESSEES

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