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EUROPEAN COUNCIL: ITALIAN PRESS COMMENT

SUMMARY

1. EUPHORIA AT SUCCESSFUL ITALIAN PRESIDENCY MEDIATION LEADING TO THE LIFTING OF GREEK RESERVES AND AGREEMENT ON ENLARGEMENT. SOME DISAPPOINTMENT AT APPARENT LACK OF SIGNIFICANT STEPS FORWARD IN OTHER IMPORTANT AREAS. INSTITUTIONAL REFORM WIDELY REGARDED AS TOP PRIORITY FOR THE JUNE COUNCIL BUT FEARS THAT THE PRESIDENCY WILL FIND IT DIFFICULT TO RECONCILE DISPERATE POSITIONS (AND OVERCOME BRITISH RESISTENCE IN PARTICULAR).

DETAIL

2. THE AGREEMENT OVER ENLARGEMENT 'AFTER EXTRA TIME AND PENALTY KICKS' (QUOTING DELORS) IS WIDELY HELD TO BE A MAJOR SUCCESS FOR THE ITALIAN PRESIDENCY. CRAXI'S CLAIM TO HAVE INSTILLED A SENSE OF 'EURO-DECISIONISMO' IS REPORTED IN ALL PAPERS. UNPRINCIPLED GREEK RESERVES HELD TO BLAME FOR THE DELAY. BUT GREEK BRINKMANSHIP IS SEEN TO HAVE PAID OFF AS THE SUM AGREED FOR FUNDING IMPS AND THE GREEK QUOTA IS RECKONED TO BE CLOSER TO GREEK DEMANDS THAN EXPECTED (STAMPA, TEMPO AND CORRIERE). GRUDGING BRITISH AND GERMAN FLEXIBILITY UNDER PRESIDENCY PRESSURE IS ACKNOWLEDGED (TEMPO AND CORRIERE).

3. WHILE THE AGREEMENT ON ENLARGEMENT IS SEEN TO HELP RESOLVE THE OUTSTANDING BUDGETARY PROBLEMS, INCLUDING BRITISH REFUNDS, MANY PAPERS SOUND A NOTE OF WARNING ABOUT THE INTERNAL TENSIONS WHICH WILL INCREASE IN A COMMUNITY OF 12 (CORRIERE, TEMPO AND AVANTI). THE GENERAL NATURE OF COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS ON THE COMMUNITY'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICY, TECHNOLOGY AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORM IS TAKEN AS A SIGN OF DIFFERENCES AMONG THE 10 ON SOLUTIONS TO FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES, WHICH WILL NEED TO BE FOUND IF ENLARGEMENT IS TO SUCCEED (CORRIERE, REPUBBLICA, SOLE 24 ORE, TEMPO). INSTITUTIONAL REFORM IS HELD BY MOST PAPERS TO BE THE TOP PRESIDENCY PRIORITY FOR THE JUNE MEETING. BUT THE LUKE-WARM REFERENCES IN THE COUNCIL CONCLUSIONS TO THE DOOGE REPORT, THE WEAK MANDATE GIVEN TO THE PRESIDENCY TO MEDIATE BILATERALLY AND THE APPARENT HOSTILITY OF A NUMBER OF MEMBER STATES (ABOVE ALL BRITAIN) TO A SIGNIFICANT EXTENSION OF THE POWER OF COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS, ARE REGARDED AS DISCOURAGING SIGNS (TEMPO, STAMPA, CORRIERE).

4. MOST PAPERS ALSO HIGHLIGHT THE ABSENCE OF AGREED CONCLUSIONS ON POLITICAL COOPERATION TOPICS AND DISCOUNT THE EXCUSE THAT TIME WAS SHORT AFTER THE ARDUOUS NEGOTIATION ON ENLARGEMENT (CORRIERE, REPUBBLICA). GERMAN RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE TEXT ON SDH ARE CITED AS THE MAIN REASON, BUT FRENCH RESERVES OVER THE MIDDLE EAST ALSO FIGURE. GIVEN THE COUNCIL'S ROLE AS THE HIGHEST EXPRESSION OF THE COMMUNITY'S POLITICAL AUTHORITY, REPUBBLICA REGARDS THIS OMISSION AS SERIOUSLY WORRYING.

4. FCO PSE PASS SAVING ADDRESSEES

BRIDGES

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