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INFO SAVING UKREP BRUSSELS, CONSULS GENERAL FRANCE

PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO LILLE, 20 JANUARY 1986 : CHANNEL FIXED LINK

SUMMARY

1. A VERY WARM RECEPTION FOR THE PRIME MINISTER IN LILLE FOR THE CFL ANNOUNCEMENT. GREAT MEDIA INTEREST.

DETAIL

2. THE PRIME MINISTER VISITED LILLE ON 20 JANUARY TO AGREE WITH PRESIDENT MITTERRAND THE CHOICE OF PROMOTER TO CONSTRUCT THE CHANNEL FIXED LINK, AND TO ANNOUNCE THE DECISION TO THE WORLD'SD PRESS. THE CITY PUT ON A FINE SHOW. ITS ROADS CLEARED OF TRAFFIC AND IN BRIGHT WINTER SUNSHINE, LILLE DISPLAYED ITS MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS TO MAXIMUM EFFECT.

3. APART FROM MAUROY, MAYOR OF LILLE, MITTERRAND WAS FLANKED BY AN ARRAY OF NATIONAL AND LOCAL POLITICIANS, MANY OF WHOM HAVE THEIR POLITICAL BASES IN NORTHERN FRANCE. PRIME MINISTER FABIUS, A LONG-STANDING ENTHUSIAST FOR THE CFL SINCE HIS DAYS AS INDUSTRY MINISTER, ATTENDED THE TALKS BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER AND PRESIDENT AND WAS AT MITTERRAND'S SIDE WHEN THE CHOICE OF PROJECT WAS ANNOUNCED. IN ADDITION MITTERRAND WAS ACCOMPANIED BY DUMAS, AUROUX (TRANSPORT, TOWN PLANNING AND HOUSING), JOSSELIN (TRANSPORT), LENGAGNE (MARITIME AFFAIRS AND ALSO MAYOR OF BOULOGNE), DELEBARRE (EMPLOYMENT) AND LE GARREC (PUBLIC SERVICES).

4. THE VISIT BEGAN WITH AN HOUR-LONG MEETING BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND MITTERRAND AND PARALLEL MEETINGS BETWEEN YOU AND DUMAS, MR RIDLEY AND AUROUX. HEADS OF GOVERNMENT IN THEIR MEETING CONFIRMED THE CHOICE OF THE CTG/FRANCEMANCHE PROJECT FOR THE CHANNEL FIXED LINK AND PUT FINAL TOUCHES TO THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE. THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE DISCUSSIONS WAS RELAXED AND WARM THROUGHOUT.

5. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE SUCCESSFUL CFL PROJECT WAS MADE BY THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PRESIDENT IN LILLE'S SPLENDID HOTEL DE VILLE, FILLED TO CAPACITY WITH SCHOOL CHILDREN, WHO LINED THE ENTRANCE HALL

WAVING.

WAVING UNION FLAGS, OTHER CITIZENS OF LILLE AND SURROUNDING AREAS, AND THE MASSED RANKS OF THE MEDIA. THE PRESIDENTS BRIEF DECLARATION IN FRENCH OF THE WINNING PROJECT, LOST NONE OF ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND DRAMA EVEN THOUGH IT CONFIRMED THAT THE PROJECT MOST WIDELY TIPPED BY THE PRESS HAD INDEED WON. IN A BRIEF INTRODUCTORY SPEECH, THE PRESIDENT EMPHASIZED THE HISTORIC NATURE OF THE DECISION FOR RELATIONS BETWEEN FRANCE AND THE UK, AND MORE WIDELY ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN TERMS OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF EUROPE. THE PRIME MINISTER UNDERLINED HER VIEW OF THE SPECIAL NATURE OF THE OCCASION, EMPHASISING ALSO THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CFL FOR TRADE AND COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE UK AND FRANCE AND THE OPPORTUNITY BEING OFFERED TO THE PRIVATE SECTORS IN BOTH COUNTRIES TO UNDERTAKE A PROJECT OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE. THE FACT THAT THE PRIME MINISTER CONCLUDED HER SPEECH WITH A PASSAGE IN FRENCH WAS WARMLY APPRECIATED AND IT WAS THIS PART OF THE PROCEEDINGS WHICH WAS PROMINENTLY FEATURED ON NATIONAL TELEVISION IN THE EVENING.

6. CONCLUDING THE CEREMONY AT THE TOWN HALL, MAUROY GAVE A SHORT BUT EXPANSIVE SPEECH ABOUT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DAY TO THE TOWN, THE REGION, THE TWO COUNTRIES AND TO EUROPE. EVENTS CONCLUDED WITH THE PRESENTATION TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE LILLE GOLD MEDAL AND THE UNVEILING BY THE TWO HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OF A PLAQUE.

7. AT A LUNCH IN THE PREFECTURE HOSTED FOR THE PRIME MINISTER AND HER PARTY BY THE PRESIDENT, NO FORMAL SPEECHES WERE GIVEN, BUT THE PRIME MINISTER ACKNOWLEDGED THE PRESIDENT'S TOAST BY SAYING HOW MUCH SHE LOOKED FORWARD TO WELCOMING HIM TO THE UK FOR THE CFL TREATY SIGNING CEREMONY ON 12 FEBRUARY.

8. TEXTS OF SPEECHES (WHERE ISSUED) WILL FOLLOW BY BAG. MIFT GIVES AN ACCOUNT OF FRENCH PRESS COVERAGE OF THE CFL DECISION.

FRETWELL

(REPEATED AS REQUESTED)

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