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MY TELNO 395: THE FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

SUMMARY

1. IF MITTERRAND WINS, THE NEW PRIME MINISTER AND HIS CABINET SHOULD BE KNOWN BY ABOUT 14/15 MAY. IF, AGAINST THE ODDS, CHIRAC WINS, IT WILL BE AROUND 21 MAY, THE DATE FOR THE FORMAL TRANSFER OF POWER. A MITTERRAND GOVERNMENT WOULD PROBABLY BE COMPOSED OF SOCIALISTS AND NON-PARTY FIGURES: THE CURRENT FRON-RUNNER AS PRIME MINISTER IS BEREGOVY. A CHIRAC GOVERNMENT WOULD CONTAIN RPR AND UDF FIGURES, AND PROBABLY SOME NON-PARTY ONES TOO. HE MIGHT OFFER THE POST OF PRIME MINISTER TO THE UDF: MEHAIGNERIE IS MENTIONED. PARLIAMENT WILL GET BACK INTO ITS STRIDE IN JUNE, IF THE NEW PRESIDENT DOES NOT DISSOLVE THE ASSEMBLY. THE PROSPECTS FOR AN EARLY DISSOLUTION AND AN ASSESSMENT OF THE LONGER TERM ARE IN MIFT.

DETAIL

2. IT MAY BE HELPFUL IF I DESCRIBE THE FRENCH POLITICAL TIMETABLE FOR THE NEXT 3-4 WEEKS.

3. THE SECOND AND FINAL ROUND OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS TAKES PLACE ON 8 MAY. THE RESULT SHOULD BE KNOWN SHORTLY AFTER 20:00 HOURS LOCAL TIME. IT WILL NOT, HOWEVER, BECOME OFFICIAL UNTIL THE CONSTITUTIONAL COUNCIL HAS SATISFIED ITSELF THAT THERE HAVE BEEN NO IRREGULARITIES. THIS USUALLY TAKES 3-4 DAYS DURING WHICH THE POLITICAL PROCESS IS EFFECTIVELY IN A STATE OF SUSPENDED ANIMATION.

IF MITTERRAND WINS

4. IF MITTERRAND WINS, THE ELYSEE EXPECT CHIRAC TO AWAIT THE CONSTITUTIONAL COUNCIL'S FORMAL DECLARATION BEFORE RESIGNING. (HE WILL NOT BE CONSTITUTIONALLY OBLIGED TO OFFER HIS RESIGNATION BUT NO-ONE DOUBTS THAT IN PRACTICE HE WILL DO SO.) MITTERRAND WILL THEN NOMINATE A NEW PRIME MINISTER (IE ON ABOUT 12-13 MAY) WHO WILL PROBABLY ANNOUNCE HIS GOVERNMENT DURING OR JUST AFTER THE WEEK-END OF 14/15 MAY,

5. THERE IS INCREASING SPECUTLATION ABOUT THE SHAPE A NEW MITTERRAND

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GOVERNMENT WOULD TAKE. HE WILL BE MUCH INFLUENCED BY THE SIZE OF THE MAJORITY AND EVIDENCE OF A STRONG SWING IN HIS FAVOUR. THE EXPECTATION IS THAT HE WOULD TRY TO PUT TOGETHER A CABINET THAT IS DRAWN PREDOMINANTLY FROM THE SOCIALIST PARTY (PS) BUT THAT ALSO INCLUDES A NUMBER OF NON-POLITICAL FIGURES, A SIGNAL THAT HE INTENDS TO GOVERN FROM THE CENTRE-LEFT. THERE IS ALSO SPECULATION ABOUT PERSONALITIES: BEREGOVY IS CURRENTLY SEEN AS THE FRONT-RUNNER FOR PRIME MINISTER, ROCARD FOR EDUCATION, DUMAS FOR JUSTICE, AND JOSPIN FOR THE QUAI. THERE IS NO FIRM FAVOURITE FOR FINANCE, DEFENCE OR INTERIOR, ANY OR ALL OF WHICH MIGHT GO TO NON-PARTY FIGURES, ALTHOUGH DELEBARRE, BIANCO, JOXE, MME CRESSON AND A NUMBER OF OTHER PS HEAVYWEIGHTS WILL ALL BE HOPING FOR JOBS. FABIOUS SEEMS LIKELY TO REPLACE JOSPIN AS FIRST SECRETARY OF THE PS RATHER THAN RETURN TO GOVERNMENT.

IF CHIRAC WINS.

6. IN THE INCRASINGLY UNLIKELY PROSPECT THAT CHIRAC WINS, HE WILL PROBABLY REMAIN CARETAKER PRIME MINISTER UNTIL THE FORMAL TRANSFER OF POWER ON 21 MAY (THE DATE ON WHICH MITTERRAND'S CURRENT TERM ENDS). HIS FIRST ACT WOULD THEN BE TO NOMINATE HIS PRIME MINISTER WHO WOULD SUBSEQUENTLY ANNOUNCE THE NEW CABINET. HE IS LIKELY TO FORM A GOVERNMENT COMPOSED MORE OR LESS EQUALLY OF THE RPR AND UDR, POSSIBLY WITH SOME NON-PARTY FIGURES. CHIRAC IS RUMOURED ALREADY TO HAVE PROMISED JOBS TO A NUMBER OF UDF LEADERS, INCLUDING POSSIBLY MATIGNON (PRIME MINISTER) TO MEHAIGNERIE, LEADER OF THE CDS.

7. THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (WHOSE SESSION IS CURRENTLY SUSPENDED) IS LIKELY TO GET BACK INTO ITS STRIDE AT THE BEGINNING OF JUNE AND TO SIT IN EXTRAORDINARY SESSION UNTIL THE END OF JULY. THIS ASSUMES THAT THE NEW PRESIDENT DOES NOT DISSOLVE IT AND CALL NEW ELECTIONS, A PROSPECT EXPLORED IN THE MEDIUM/LONGER TERM ASSESSMENT OF FRENCH POLITICS PROVIDED IN MIFT.

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