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WELLINGTON FOR LORD GLENARTHUR

THE FRENCH PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

SUMMARY

1. MITTERRAND HAS BEEN RE-ELECTED BY 54-46 PERCENT. A BAD RESULT FOR CHIRAC BEATEN TWICE AS BADLY AS GISCARD IN 1981. FRANCE HAS PLAYED SAFE, OPTING FOR MITTERRAND'S EXPERIENCE AND REASSURED BY HIS PROMISE TO GOVERN FROM THE PRAGMATIC CENTRE. THE SOCIALIST PARTY WILL PUT PRESSURE ON HIM TO DISSOLVE THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. HE MAY PREFER TO WAIT AND SEE HOW THE RIGHT REACT TO DEFEAT AND TO THE CHALLENGE FROM LE PEN. THE NEW PRIME MINISTER MAY BE KNOWN SHORTLY. I RECOMMEND MESSAGES OF CONGRATULATION.

DETAIL

2. MITTERRAND HAS BEEN RE-ELECTED. COUNTING WILL CONTINUE FOR SOME TIME BUT COMPUTER PROJECTIONS SUGGEST THAT HE HAS BEATEN CHIRAC BY A 54-46 PERCENT MARGIN. THIS IS A LANDSLIDE IN FRENCH TERMS. MITTERRAND WILL TAKE PARTICULAR PLEASURE IN BEING THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE FIFTH REPUBLIC TO BE DIRECTLY ELECTED TWICE (DE GAULLE'S FIRST ELECTION WAS BY INDIRECT SUFFRAGE). HIS ONLY REGRET MAY BE THAT HE HAS JUST FALLEN SHORT OF A VICTORY OVER HIS GAULLIST CHALLENGER BY THE 10 PERCENT MARGIN BY WHICH DE GAULLE BEAT HIM IN 1965.

3. FOR CHIRAC THIS IS A VERY BAD RESULT. NEITHER THE ADVANTAGES PROVIDED BY MATIGNON, NOR THE SUPPORT OF THE WELL-OILED AND WELL HEELED RPR MACHINE, HAVE PREVENTED HIM FROM BEING BEATEN MORE THAN TWICE AS BADLY AS GISCARD IN 1981. HIS EFFORTS TO APPEAL TO LE PEN'S FIRST ROUND VOTERS ON THE EXTREME RIGHT WITHOUT ALIENTATING BARRE'S VOTERS IN THE CENTRE HAVE FAILED. IN TRYING TO PLEASE BOTH HE HAS SATISFIED NEITHER.

4. THE FRENCH HAVE PLAYED SAFE, OPTING FOR EXPERIENCE RATHER THAN TAKING A CHANCE ON CHIRAC'S SELF-PROCLAIMED DYNAMISM (WHICH MANY

VOTERS SUSPECT MIGHT BE SYNONYMOUS WITH ADVENTURISM). MITTERRAND'S ABANDONMENT OF IDEOLOGICAL SOCIALISM, AND HIS COMMITMENT TO UNITE THE COUNTRY AROUND THE PRAGMATIC CENTRE, HAVE PROVED MORE REASSURING THAN CHIRAC'S ACTIVISM. MITTERRAND HAS ALSO BENEFITTED FROM DISQUIET ABOUT CHIRAC'S TEMPERAMENT AND JUDGEMENT. THERE WAS NERVOUSNESS THAT THE LATTER'S POLICIES AND STYLE WOULD HAVE STRAINED THE SOCIAL FABRIC, PARTICULARLY IF HE HAD DONE DEALS WITH LE PEN. THE "'COUPS DE THEATRE'" IN THE FINAL HOURS OF THE CAMPAIGN (THE RELEASE OF THE HOSTAGES, THE POLICE ACTION IN NEW CALEDONIA, AND THE LAST MINUTE REPATRIATION OF THE GREENPEACE SABOTEUR, CAPTAIN PRIEUR, IN DEFIANCE OF FRANCE'S AGREEMENT WITH NEW ZEALAND) MAY HAVE REINFORCED SUCH DOUBTS, ESPECIALLY AMONG CENTRIST SUPPORTERS OF BARRE.

5. MITTERRAND IS SET TO DOMINATE THE POLITICAL SCENE FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE. THE LEFT OWE TO HIM A SECOND CONSECUTIVE PRESIDENTIAL VICTORY, WHILE THE RIGHT WILL BE DEMORALISED AND DIVIDED BY A SECOND CONSECUTIVE PRESIDENTIAL DEFEAT. THERE WILL BE PRESSURE ON HIM FROM WITHIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY (PS) TO DISSOLVE THE ASSEMBLY AND CALL LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS AT WHICH, EVEN UNDER THE PRESENT CONSTITUENCY BASED SYSTEM, THE PS WOULD HOPE TO GAIN A CONSIDERABLE NUMBER OF SEATS. MITTERRAND MAY RESIST, ANYWAY FOR A TIME, UNTIL HE SEES HOW THE RIGHT REACT TO THE CHALLENGES OF DEFEAT AND OF LE PEN. HIS AIM IS TO ATTRACT PART OF THE CENTRE-RIGHT INTO GOVERNMENT WITH THE PS, BUT SUCH A REALIGNMENT WILL TAKE TIME TO ENGINEER. HE MAY THEREFORE JUDGE IT BEST TO HASTEN SLOWLY.

6. WITHIN THE RIGHT ITSELF THE PICTURE WILL BE CONFUSED FOR SOME TIME TO COME. CHIRAC AND THE RPR WILL TRY TO MAINTAIN THE DOMINANCE THEY HAVE ENJOYED SINCE MARCH 1986 BUT WILL FIND IT DIFFICULT. BESIEGED ON THE RIGHT BY LE PEN, AND REPUDIATED BY MANY IN THE UDF WHO BLAME CHIRAC FOR GISCARD'S 1981 DEFEAT AND WILL NOW HOLD HIM RESPONSIBLE FOR GIVING MITTERRAND ANOTHER 7 YEARS, CHIRAC'S POLITICAL AUTHORITY WILL BE SHARPLY DIMINISHED. AND IN A MEDIA-DOMINATED ELECTION, HIS OWN PERSONALITY HAS FAILED TO ATTRACT THE ELECTORS. THE FAILURE IS THEREFORE CLEARLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO HIM. THE KNIVES WILL BE OUT FOR HIM, FROM THOSE SUCH AS LEOTARD WHO SEE THEMSELVES AS POTENTIAL LEADERS OF A REGROUPED RIGHT.

7. THE RESULT OF THE ELECTION WILL BE FINALLY DECLARED BY THE CONSTITUTIONAL COUNCIL IN 3-4 DAYS. THERE IS SOME DOUBT WHETHER CHIRAC WILL RESIGN BEFORE OR AFTER THIS ANNOUNCEMENT. ONCE HE DOES SO, MITTERRAND WILL APPOINT A NEW PRIME MINISTER. HE HAS AS YET GIVEN NO INDICATION AS TO WHO THIS WILL BE, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE STRONG RUMOURS THAT ROCARD IS FAVOURITE. BUT BEREGOVY, DELORS AND

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OTHERS ARE STILL HOPEFUL. IT DOES NOT SEEM LIKELY THAT MITTERRAND
WILL LOOK OUTSIDE THE SOCIALISTS.

8. I RECOMMEND THAT HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN AND AND THE PRIME MINISTER
SHOULD SEND MESSAGES TO MITTERRAND. I SEE NO NEED TO AWAIT THE
FORMALITY OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL COUNCIL'S ANNOUNCEMENT BEFORE
DELIVERING THEM.

FERGUSSON

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