

CONFIDENTIAL

076462
MDHIAN 1811

CONFIDENTIAL

FM PARIS

TO DESKBY 031200Z FCO

TELNO 555

OF 030834Z JUN 88

INFO PRIORITY EC POSTS, WASHINGTON, MOSCOW, UKDEL NATO

INFO SAVING HM CONSULS GENERAL IN FRANCE

MY TELNO 520

FRENCH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS: FIRST ROUND

SUMMARY

1. THE FIRST ROUND IS ON 5 JUNE. THE SOCIALISTS (PS) HOPE TO WIN OVER 40 PERCENT OF THE VOTE. THEY THINK THEY ARE ON COURSE FOR A CONVINCING MAJORITY. THE UDF AND RPR ARE BRACED FOR DEFEAT. THE BATTLE FOR THE RIGHT WILL RESUME WHEN THE ELECTIONS ARE OVER. THE COMMUNISTS (PCF) AND THE FRONT NATIONAL (FN) WILL DO WELL TO SECURE A HANDFUL OF SEATS. LE PEN'S ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE HIMSELF ON MARSEILLES SEEMS LIKELY TO FAIL.
2. A DULL CAMPAIGN, WITH LITTLE DEBATE, IN A FRANCE WEARY OF ELECTIONEERING. ONCE THE ELECTIONS ARE OVER THE PARTIES WILL BEGIN THE UNCERTAIN PROCESS OF RE-DRAWING THE POLITICAL MAP.

DETIAL

3. THE FIRST ROUND OF THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTRICIONS WILL BE HELD ON 5 JUNE. IN THOSE CONSTITUENCIES WHERE A CANDIDATE RECEIVES MORE THAN 50 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, HE OR SHE WILL BE ELECTED OUTRIGHT. IN THE MANY CONSTITUENCIES WHERE THIS DOES NOT OCCUR, CANDIDATES WHO RECEIVED AT LEAST 12.5 PERCENT MAY, IF THEY WISH, STAND AGAIN IN THE SECOND ROUND RUN-OFF ON 12 JUNE. THE DEALS WHICH WILL BE DONE IN BETWEEN THE TWO ROUNDS (PROBABLY BOTH ON THE RIGHT AND THE LEFT) WILL HAVE AN IMPORTANT EFFECT ON THE SIZE OF THE EVENTUAL MAJORITY, AND THE PROSPECTS FOR A POLITICAL OPENING (QUOTE EUVERTURE UNQUOTE).
4. THE SOCIALISTS REMAIN CONFIDENT THAT THEY ARE HEADING FOR A COMFORTABLE VICTORY, BUOYED UP BY MITTERRAND'S PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESS. TOGETHER WITH THEIR SMALL MRG (LEFT RADICAL) ALLIES, THEY HOPE TO SECURE MORE THAN 40 PERCENT OF THE VOTE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS. IF THEY DO, THEY SHOULD BE ASSURED OF A CLEAR MAJORITY, THEIR PRIVATE SOUNDINGS APPARENTLY SUGGEST THAT THEY MAY WIN 320-350 OF THE ASSEMBLY'S 577 SEATS, WHICH WOULD GIVE THEM A MAJORITY OF SOMEWHERE BETWEEN 60-120 SEATS OVER ALL OTHER PARTIES.

CONFIDENTIAL

076462
MDHIAN 1811

THEY INSIST THAT, WHATEVER THE SCALE OF THEIR VICTORY, THEY WILL CONTINUE TO WORK FOR QUOTE OUVERTURE UNQUOTE. ROCARD REITERATED THIS COMMITMENT IN A LE MONDE INTERVIEW ON 2 JUNE (TEXT BY BAG TO THE DEPARTMENT).

5. THE MAIN CONCERN OF THE UDF AND RPR, FIGHTING JOINTLY UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF THE UNION DU RASSEMBLEMENT ET DU CENTRE (URC), IS DAMAGE LIMITATION. URC LEADERS DO NOT BELIEVE THAT VICTORY IS POSSIBLE: THE QUESTION IS THE SCALE OF THE DEFEAT. CHIRAC HAS BEEN TRYING TO POLARISE THE ELECTION ON LEFT/RIGHT LINES, WARNING THAT FRANCE WILL RUN SERIOUS RISKS IF MITTERRAND IS GIVEN A LARGE PS MAJORITY. GISCARD HAS AVOIDED THIS APPROACH AND APPEARS CLOSER TO THE PUBLIC MOOD IN ARGUING THAT QUOTE OUVERTURE UNQUOTE WILL ONLY BE POSSIBLE IF THE COUNTRY ELECTS A SIZEABLE COMPLEMENT OF MODERATE URC DEPUTIES TO WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE PS. THE DIFFERENCE IN THE POSITIONS ADOPTED BY CHIRAC AND GISCARD POINTS TO THE TENSIONS WITHIN THE RIGHT. THE BATTLE TO RESHAPE AND CONTROL IT WILL BEGIN IN EARNEST WHEN THE ELECTIONS ARE OVER.

6. THE COMMUNISTS EXPECT TO IMPROVE ON THE 6.7 PERCENT LAJOINIE OBTAINED IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, CONFIDENT THAT THE POPULARITY OF LOCAL FIGURES WITH GOOD CONSTITUENCY RECORDS WILL LIFT THEM TO 8-9 PERCENT. IN HISTORICAL TERMS, THIS WOULD STILL BE A DISASTROUS RESULT AND WOULD GIVE THEM NO MORE THAN A HANDFUL OF DEPUTIES.

7. THE FN TOO IS PROBABLY HEADING FOR A BAD RESULT. IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF THE 14.4 PERCENT WHO VOTED FOR LE PEN AS A PROTEST IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS WILL VOTE DIFFERENTLY WHEN IT COMES TO CHOOSING THEIR LOCAL DEPUTY. LE PEN AND SOME OF HIS CLOSEST LIEUTENANTS HAVE DESCENDED ON MARSEILLES IN THE HOPE THAT THE CITY WHICH GAVE HIM OVER 26 PERCENT OF THE VOTE IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS WILL NOW RETURN A GROUP OF FN DEPUTIES TO THE ASSEMBLY. BUT THEIR HOPES LOOK MISPLACED: THE LOCAL FN LEADER HAS TOLD US PRIVATELY THAT HE DOES NOT THINK LE PEN WILL BE ELECTED.

CONCLUSION

8. THIS HAS BEEN A LIFELESS CAMPAIGN. CANDIDATES HAVE BEEN CONCERNED TO MAKE THEIR FACES KNOWN RATHER THAN TO INDULGE IN POLITICAL DEBATE FOR WHICH THERE IS LITTLE PUBLIC APPETITE. VOTERS WHO MADE THEIR CHOICE IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS SEE THE LEGISLATIVES AS LITTLE MORE THAN A CONFIRMATION OF A DECISION ALREADY TAKEN. DESPITE THE AIR OF WEARINESS, POLITICAL CALM WILL NOT NECESSARILY FOLLOW THESE ELECTIONS. AS SOON AS THE IMMEDIATE BUSINESS OF CHOOSING THE

CONFIDENTIAL

076462
MDHIAN 1811

ASSEMBLY IS OVER, THE PARTIES AND THEIR LEADERS WILL BEGIN THE
DIFFICULT AND PROTRACTED PROCESS OF REDRAWING A FRENCH POLITICAL
LANDSCAPE THAT MUST NOW ACCOMMODATE AN INCREASINGLY DISORIENTATED
AND FRAGMENTED RIGHT.

LLEWELLYN SMITH

YYYY

DISTRIBUTION 250

MAIN 248

EUROPEAN POLITICAL

WED (-) 0

ADDITIONAL 2

ASSESSMENTS STAFF,
CABINET OFFICE

MR P J WESTON CAB OFF

NNNN