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FRENCH INTERNAL POLITICS

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SUMMARY

1. MITTERRAND WILL ASK ROCARD TO FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT WHEN PARLIAMENT REASSEMBLES NEXT WEEK. ROCARD MAY ANNOUNCE HIS PROGRAMME ON 29 JUNE. IN A TELEVISED ADDRESS ON 14 JUNE, MITTERRAND INDICATED HIS DETERMINATION TO PURSUE A POLITICAL OPENING ('OUVERTURE'), WHICH HE SEES AS A PROCESS, NOT AS A SUDDEN DEVELOPMENT. ROCARD IS LIKELY TO TRY TO DRAW THE CENTRISTS (CDS) INTO DISCUSSION ABOUT THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S MEASURES, WITH THE AIM OF CREATING A CLIMATE OF CENTRE-LEFT CO-OPERATION THAT COULD PAVE THE WAY FOR COALITION.

DETAIL

2. MITTERRAND REFUSED ROCARD'S OFFER OF RESIGNATION ON 14 JUNE AND HAS ASKED THE GOVERNMENT TO CONTINUE IN OFFICE UNTIL PARLIAMENT REASSEMBLES ON 22-23 JUNE. IT WILL THEN BE REPLACED BY A NEW MINORITY GOVERNMENT, ALSO TO BE LED BY ROCARD. THERE ARE STORIES THAT THE PRESIDENT WANTS IT TO INCLUDE NON-SOCIALIST EXPERTS (EG INDUSTRIALISTS, ACADEMICS, ETC) AS EVIDENCE OF HIS COMMITMENT TO 'OUVERTURE'. THE BEST GUESS IS THAT THE COMPOSITION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL BE ANNOUNCED ON 26 JUNE, ON THE EVE OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, AND THAT ROCARD WILL MAKE A STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT ON 29 JUNE SETTING OUT HIS PROGRAMME.

3. IN A TELEVISED ADDRESS TO THE NATION ON 14 JUNE, MITTERRAND INSISTED THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD BE STABLE, DESPITE BEING SHORT OF AN OVERALL MAJORITY. INDEED, THERE IS LITTLE PROSPECT OF THE COMMUNISTS AND THE RIGHT COMBINING TO BRING IT DOWN. MITTERRAND ALSO MADE CLEAR HIS DETERMINATION TO PURSUE 'OUVERTURE' ON TWO LEVELS:-

(I) POLITICAL: HE MADE NO SPECIFIC MENTION OF THE CENTRE-RIGHT CDS BUT THE TONE AND CONTENT OF HIS ADDRESS WERE DESIGNED TO APPEAL TO THEM AND TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO MOVE AWAY FROM THEIR CURRENT RIGHT WING ALLIES. MITTERRAND'S PLEDGE TO CONCENTRATE ON EUROPE,

DISARMAMENT AND THE THIRD WORLD IN FOREIGN POLICY, AND ON EDUCATION, INVESTMENT AND SOCIAL SOLIDARITY AT HOME PROVIDED A BLUEPRINT OF WHICH THE CENTRISTS SHOULD APPROVE.

(II) ADMINISTRATIVE/ECONOMIC: HE INSISTED ON THE NEED FOR AN 'IMPARTIAL STATE'. THIS IS A BOW IN THE DIRECTION OF BARRE, WHO MADE THIS A PRINCIPAL THEME OF HIS PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND WHO HAS BEEN SPEAKING FAVOURABLY OF 'OUVERTURE'. THE IMPLICATION IS THAT THE ROCARD GOVERNMENT WILL COMMIT ITSELF TO MAKING PUBLIC APPOINTMENTS SOLELY ON THE BASIS OF MERIT, RATHER THAN POLITICAL AFFILIATION. MITTERRAND ALSO CALLED FOR DIALOGUE AND SHARED RESPONSIBILITY WITHIN INDUSTRY.

4. MITTERRAND MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE SEES 'OUVERTURE' AS AN ATTITUDE, AND A GRADUAL PROCESS. THE BROAD COMPOSITION OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL BE THE FIRST STEP, ROCARD'S STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT THE SECOND. THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRAMME WILL BE BUILT AROUND THE COMMITMENTS WHICH MITTERRAND GAVE DURING THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN IN HIS 'LETTER TO ALL THE FRENCH' (MY TELNO 340 AND MY SAVINGRAM 18), BUT ROCARD WILL TRY TO DRAW THE CENTRISTS INTO CONSTRUCTIVE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ABOUT THE BEST WAY OF IMPLEMENTING THOSE COMMITMENTS. HIS AIM WILL BE TO CREATE A CLIMATE OF CENTRE-LEFT CONSULTATION AND CO-OPERATION WHICH COULD EVENTUALLY LEAD TO COALITION.

5. IF THE CENTRISTS ARE TO GET INTO A SERIOUS DIALOGUE WITH THE PS, AS MITTERRAND HOPES, THEY WILL HAVE TO ESTABLISH THEMSELVES AS AN INDEPENDENT POLITICAL GROUP. THEY ARE HESITANT ABOUT CASTING THEMSELVES OFF FROM THEIR CURRENT ALLIANCES, BUT EXCITED AT THE PROSPECT OF EMERGING AS POTENTIAL COALITION PARTNERS FOR EITHER LEFT OR RIGHT (FREQUENT REFERENCE IS MADE TO THE ROLE OF THE WEST GERMAN FDP). THE SIGNS ARE THAT, ENCOURAGED BY BARRE, THEY HAVE FINALLY STEELED THEMSELVES TO FORM THEIR OWN GROUP, DESPITE FURIOUS EFFORTS BY GISCARD AND THEIR UDF ALJ ?.,4^3^6/5#3.. IF SO THE ELEMENTS FOR POTENTIAL CENTRE-LEFT CO-OPERATION WILL HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED.

6. SUCH CO-OPERATION WILL NOT BE EASY AND WILL TAKE TIME TO DEVELOP. THE CDS WILL PROBABLY BE UNWILLING TO CONTEMPLATE AN ALLIANCE WITH THE PS BEFORE THE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN MARCH NEXT YEAR, FOR FEAR OF BEING THE LOSERS FROM DIRECT CONTESTS WITH RPR/PR, AND MAY CONTINUE TO REJECT IT AFTERWARDS. (THE RIGHT WILL CERTAINLY TRY TO BLOCK IT IF THEY CAN.) MITTERRAND MEANWHILE APPEARS TO HAVE DECIDED ON A WAITING GAME, READY TO MULTIPLY HIS GESTURES TOWARDS THEM IF THEY DO GO SOLO, AT A TIME WHEN THEIR FORMER RIGHT WING PARTNERS

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WILL PROBABLY REVILE THEM. HIS HOPE MUST BE THAT IN DUE COURSE THE
PROSPECT OF MINISTERIAL OFFICE, IN A MODERATE GOVERNMENT GIVING HIGH
PRIORITY TO EUROPE, WILL PROVE IRRESISTIBLE.

FERGUSSON

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