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ITALO-FRENCH SUMMIT, SICILY, 30 MARCH

SUMMARY

1. MITTERRAND AND DE MITA MET IN TAORMINA FOR SOME THREE HOURS ON 30 MARCH. MAIN FOCUS OF DISCUSSION WAS ON EUROPEAN COMMUNITY ISSUES. THE MINI SUMMIT WAS PRESENTED AS PREPARING THE GROUND FOR MADRID. MITTERRAND AND DE MITA AGREED ON THE AIM TO CREATE A SINGLE EUROPEAN CURRENCY AND A EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK. BUT ACCOUNT ALSO TAKEN OF BRITISH RESERVATIONS. AGENDA ALSO INCLUDED COOPERATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN, DEVELOPMENTS IN SOVIET POLICY AND TERRORISM.

DETAIL

2. THE TAORMINA MEETING RECEIVED EXTENSIVE COVERAGE IN THE ITALIAN MEDIA, CONVEYING THE OVERALL IMPRESSION THAT DE MITA SAW EYE TO EYE WITH MITTERRAND ON ALMOST ALL EC ISSUES. PARTICULAR PROMINENCE WAS GIVEN TO THE IDENTITY OF VIEW RECORDED ON EC MONETARY POLICY AND ON THE SOCIAL SPACE. COVERAGE IN MAY NEWS-PAPERS PLAYED UP THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE JOINT ITALO-FRENCH POSITION AND THAT OF THE UK, WITH HEADLINE TREATMENT SUGGESTING THAT THE FRENCH AND ITALIANS, TOGETHER WITH THE GERMANS, SPANISH AND OTHERS, ARE DETERMINED TO PUSH AHEAD WITH THE CREATION OF A SINGLE EUROPEAN CURRENCY AND A CENTRAL BANK NOTWITHSTANDING MRS THATCHER'S OPPOSITION.

3. THIS COMBATIVE TONE IS NOT, HOWEVER, APPARENT IN THE REPORTING OF WHAT DE MITA AND MITTERRAND ACTUALLY SAID DURING THEIR JOINT PRESS BRIEFING. DE MITA IS QUOTED IN MOST PAPERS AS HAVING SAID 'THE MONETARY ASPECT MUST SHOW PROGRESS PARALLEL TO THE COMPLETION OF THE SINGLE MARKET ... WE HAVE CONSIDERED THE RISKS BUT THE OBJECTIVE IS SO IMPORTANT IT MUST BE PURSUED ... WE MUST FIND A WAY THROUGH WHICH AVOIDS CONFRONTATIONS AND ACHIEVES AGREEMENT'. MITTERRAND, FOR HIS PART, IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID 'THE TASK IS TO WORK IN SUCH A WAY AS TO AVOID THE POSSIBLE RISK OF COLLISION WITH COUNTRIES SUCH AS BRITAIN WHICH HAVE A MUCH MORE CAUTIOUS APPROACH TO THE ISSUE ... THE COMMUNITY HAS OVERCOME IN RECENT

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YEARS MANY DIFFICULTIES WHICH WERE AT FIRST SIGHT UNSURMOUNTABLE ... THE SUMMITS OF MILAN, FONTAINEBLEAU AND HANOVER WERE ALL FORWARD STEPS. WHY SHOULD MARDRID NOT BE ANOTH MILESTONE? WE DISCUSS AND WE TRY TO REACH AGREEMENT. IF WE DO NOW SUCCEED THE COMMENTS COME AFTERWARDS. BUT THERE IS NO REASON TO DOUBT THE STRENGTH OF THE DYNAMIC OF EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION''.

4. OTHER EC ISSUES ON THE AGENDA WERE APPARENTLY TAX HARMONISATION, CAPITAL TAXATION AND MONOPOLIES AND THE FREE MOVEMENT OF PEOPLE. ON THE LATTER IT IS NOTED BY SOME PAPERS THAT ITALIAN BORDER CONTROLS ARE MUCH LAXER THAN IN OTHER EC COUNTRIES.

5. INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS RECEIVED LESS COVERAGE. DE MITA AND MITTERRAND ARE REPORTED TO HAVE EXCHANGED VIEWS ON THE MEDITERRANEAN AREA AND AGREED ON THE NEED FOR CLOSER COOPERATION BOTH BETWEEN FRANCE AND ITALY AND WITH THE COUNTRIES OF NORTH AFRICA. THE TWO LEADERS ALSO AGREED THAT THE SUMMIT SEVEN MEETING IN PARIS IN JULY SHOULD TACKLE THE PROBLEM OF THE INDEBTEDNESS OF THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. THERE WAS AN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE SOVIET UNION.

6. SEVERAL PAPERS REPORTED THAT AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE MITTERRAND WAS PRESSED BY JOURNALISTS TO CLARIFY THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT'S POSITION ON THE POSSIBLE EXTRADITION OF THE TWO RED BRIGADES TERRORISTS ARRESTED IN PARIS LAST SEPTEMBER. IN REPLY MITTERRAND EXPLAINED THAT EXTRADITION WAS A MATTER FOR THE FRENCH JUDICIARY RATHER THAN FOR THE GOVERNMENT. BUT HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT THERE HAD BEEN A CHANGE OF INTERPRETATION OF THE JUDICIAL ASPECTS OF EXTRADITION IN FRANCE IN RECENT YEARS AND THAT IN RESPONSE TO REQUESTS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES, IN PARTICULAR EC PARTNERS, IT WAS RIGHT THAT SUSPECTS SHOULD BE EXTRADITED. WITH REGARD TO THE SPECIFIC RED BRIGADES CASE MITTERRAND ADDED THAT ONCE THE ITALIAN JUDICIARY PRESENTED A FORMAL APPLICATION FOR EXTRADITION IT WOULD BE THE DUTY OF FRANCE TO SHOW SOLIDARITY WITH ITALY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST TERRORISM.

COMMENT

7. IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE SUMMIT DE MITA LEFT FOR JAPAN TAKING HIS SENIOR DIPLOMATIC ADVISERS WITH HIM. HOWEVER, A MEMBER OF DE MITA'S STAFF IN ROME WHO WAS PRESENT AT THE SUMMIT HAS GIVEN US HIS OWN ACCOUNT WHICH TALLIES IN ALL IMPORTANT RESPECTS WITH THE REPORTS IN THE MEDIA. TONINI VOUCHED, IN PARTICULAR, FOR THE STATEMENTS BY DE MITA AND MITTERRAND IN PARA 3 ABOVE. TONINI ADDED THAT SOME NEWSPAPERS HAD GIVEN UNDUE PROMINENCE TO THOSE EC QUESTIONS

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ON WHICH THE BRITISH POSITION WAS KNOWN TO BE DIFFERENT, CONVEYING
IN THE PROCESS THE IMPRESSION OF SINGLING OUT THE UK FOR SPECIAL
CRITICISM. HE SAID THAT THIS WAS NOT AN ACCURATE REFLECTION OF
THE LINE TAKEN BY DE MITA AND MITTERRAND.

8. IT WAS ANNOUNCED DURING THE SUMMIT THAT COSSIGA WILL PAY A
STATE VISIT TO FRANCE NEXT MONTH ACCOMPANIED BY DE MITA AND THAT
THE NEXT BILATERAL SUMMIT WILL TAKE PLACE IN VENICE IN OCTOBER.

THOMAS

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