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INFORMAL MEETING ON EASTERN EUROPE : FRENCH PRESS REACTION

SUMMARY

1. GENERAL SATISFACTION. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN UK AND FRANCE TREATED IN REASONABLE TERMS. MITTERRAND TO MEET BUSH IN DECEMBER.

DETAIL

2. WHATEVER THEIR POLITICAL PERSUASION THE PRESS EXPRESS GENERAL SATISFACTION AT THE OUTCOME OF THE DINNER ON 18 NOVEMBER. SOME POINT OUT THAT THE AGREEMENT TO WELCOME DEVELOPMENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE WAS HARDLY SURPRISING OR DIFFICULT TO REACH, ARGUING THAT ALL THE HARD DECISIONS ARE STILL TO COME, BUT MOST GIVE MITTERRAND CREDIT FOR ORGANISING AND ARTICULATING A PROMPT POLITICAL RESPONSE TO FAST-MOVING AND FAR-REACHING DEVELOPMENTS ON THE COMMUNITY'S OWN CONTINENT. SENIOR POLITICIANS AND COMMENTATORS HAVE TAKEN PRIDE IN THIS EVIDENCE THAT THE TWELVE CAN SPEAK WITH ONE VOICE AND MAKE THEIR MARK IN THE WORLD. THE OPPORTUNITY TAKEN BY KOHL TO REAFFIRM HIS COUNTRY'S CONTINUED COMMITMENT TO EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IS APPRECIATED, WHILE MITTERRAND HIMSELF IS SEEN AS HAVING GIVEN GROUND IN ACCEPTING THAT ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO EASTERN EUROPE SHOULD BE CONDITIONAL ON PROGRESS TOWARDS FULL DEMOCRACY BEING SUSTAINED.

3. THE TWO MAIN DIFFERENCES OF OPINION BETWEEN THE UNITED KINGDOM AND FRANCE ARE CORRECTLY IDENTIFIED BUT DESCRIBED IN GENERALLY REASONABLE TERMS. THE UK IS SEEN BY SOME NEWSPAPERS AS ENJOYING AT LEAST PARTIAL SUPPORT FROM THE FRG IN ITS RELUCTANCE TO COMMIT ITSELF TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK WHILE THE MEETING IS SEEN AS HAVING DONE NOTHING TO CONVINCE THE BRITISH OF THE VALIDITY OF THE FRENCH THESIS WHEREBY EVOLUTION IN EASTERN EUROPE CALLS FOR SWIFTER INTEGRATION IN WESTERN EUROPE. THE FORTHCOMING DISCUSSIONS AT STRASBOURG ON EMU AND THE SOCIAL CHARTER THUS REMAIN AS

PROBLEMATIC AS EVER.

4. LE MONDE, WRITING AFTER THE OTHERS, IS ABLE TO FILL OUT A SLIGHTLY OBSCURE ALLUSION MADE BY MITTERRAND DURING HIS PRESS CONFERENCE TO A POSSIBLE MEETING BETWEEN HIM AND BUSH. THEY SAY THAT ACCORDING TO ELYSEE SOURCES SUCH A MEETING WILL TAKE PLACE SOMETIME IN DECEMBER BUT AFTER THE STRASBOURG COUNCIL AND AT A PLACE YET TO BE DETERMINED OUTSIDE FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES. THIS MEETING WOULD BE IN ADDITION TO ANY POSSIBLE REPORT BACK BY PRESIDENT BUSH AFTER THE MALTA MEETING TO HIS ALLIES IN BRUSSELS.

FERGUSSON

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