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TELNO 187

OF 141920Z FEBRUARY 90

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MITTERRAND INTERVIEW WITH FRENCH PROVINCIAL PRESS : 14 FEBRUARY

SUMMARY

1. AUTHORITATIVE PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT, ASSERTING FRENCH ROLE IN EXTERNAL ASPECTS OF GERMAN QUESTION WHILE ATTEMPTING TO REASSURE GERMAN OPINION. ADVOCATES BRINGING FORWARD THE IGC AND SUGGESTS THE SOVIET UNION MIGHT BENEFIT FROM EC AID PROGRAMMES. DEVELOPS HIS THINKING ON CONFEDERATION.

DETAIL

2. WE LEARNED FROM THE ELYSEE LAST WEEK THAT MITTERRAND HAD GIVEN AN INTERVIEW TO PROVINCIAL JOURNALISTS AROUND 8 FEBRUARY. IT FINALLY CAME OUT TODAY IN EIGHT REGIONAL PAPERS. THE INTERVIEW IS DEVOTED TO EAST/WEST MATTERS (INCLUDING THE GERMAN QUESTION AND SECURITY) AND MORE BRIEFLY THE COMMUNITY AND MITTERRAND'S IDEA OF A EUROPEAN CONFEDERATION.

3. THE PRESIDENT OPENED BY WELCOMING DEVELOPMENTS IN EASTERN EUROPE AND THE SOVIET UNION. HE PRAISED GORBACHEV: QUOTE WHATEVER THE OUTCOME OF THESE EVENTS GORBACHEV WILL HAVE CHANGED THE HISTORY UNQUOTE. ASKED WHAT THE WEST COULD DO TO HELP GORBACHEV, MITTERRAND SAID THEY COULD DO LITTLE TO HELP POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORM, BUT A LOT TO HELP THE ECONOMY TURN ROUND, FOR EXAMPLE THROUGH THE EUROPEAN TRAINING FOUNDATION - TO HELP DEVELOP MODERN SKILLS, INCLUDING IN THE WORKINGS OF THE MARKET ECONOMY - THROUGH FOOD AID - WHICH WAS URGENT - AND THROUGH LONG TERM FINANCIAL SUPPORT FROM THE EBRD. THERE WAS A NEED ALSO FOR JOINT VENTURES BETWEEN SOVIET AND WESTERN COMPANIES. LESS DIRECTLY, DISARMAMENT AND THE CREATION OF A CLIMATE OF PEACE WOULD HELP CHANNEL INVESTMENT TO PRODUCTIVE ENDS.

GERMANY

4. ON THE GERMAN QUESTION, THE PRESIDENT SAID QUOTE UNIFICATION IS ESSENTIALLY A MATTER FOR THEIR FREE WILL AND CHOICE ... IT IS A

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT. THAT SAID, THE GERMANS MUST TAKE ACCOUNT OF OBLIGATIONS WHICH TIE US TO EACH OTHER, OBLIGATIONS OF SECURITY IN EUROPE, OF THE FUTURE OF THE COMMUNITY AND OF EUROPEAN BALANCE. THE DECLARATION UNANIMOUSLY AGREED BY THE TWELVE IN DECEMBER 1989 USEFULLY RECALLED THIS UNQUOTE. WHEN ASKED WHETHER THESE OBLIGATIONS INCLUDED RECOGNITION WITHOUT AMBIGUITY OF THE ODER NEISSE FRONTIER, MITTERRAND REPLIED QUOTE YES UNQUOTE.

5. ASKED WHETHER THE HOLES IN THE BERLIN WALL HAD NOT GIVEN A CHILL TO FRANCO-GERMAN RELATIONS. MITTERRAND REPLIED THAT HE ACCEPTED THAT GERMAN CONFEDERATION, FEDERATION OR SOME OTHER FORM OF COMING TOGETHER WOULD PROBABLY OCCUR THIS YEAR. QUOTE WHO WOULD NOT UNDERSTAND THE ASPIRATIONS FOR UNITY OF A PEOPLE SO LONG DIVIDED? FRENCHMEN, THAT IS WHY I TOOK PART IN THE RESISTANCE WHEN FRANCE WAS OCCUPIED AND DIVIDED BY GERMAN FORCE. IT WOULD BE UNJUST TO HOLD PRESENT GENERATIONS RESPONSIBLE FOR A PAST THAT IS HALF A CENTURY OLD. THE FRENCH AND GERMANS HAVE NOT JUST BEEN RECONCILED, THEY HAVE BUILT SINCE THAT TIME A SOLID FRIENDSHIP UNQUOTE. MITTERRAND THEN EXPRESSES HIS FRATERNAL GREETINGS TO THE GERMANS THAT THEY SHOULD 'HAPPILY FULFIL THEIR DESTINY'. BUT QUOTE UNIFICATION WHATEVER FORM IT TAKES WILL BRING CONSEQUENCES IN WHICH FRANCE IS DIRECTLY INTERESTED - HOW PEACE SHOULD BE ESTABLISHED, HOW FRONTIERS SHOULD BE FIXED, THE COMMUNITY INTEGRATED, ARMED FORCES STATIONED MY DUTY IS IN ALL THINGS TO LOOK AFTER THE SECURITY AND FUNDAMENTAL INTERESTS OF FRANCE UNQUOTE.

6. ASKED WHETHER FRANCE WOULD NOT RISK SEEMING REDUCED IN COMPARISON WITH GERMANY, MITTERRAND ADMITS THAT 80 MILLION GERMANS WOULD QUOTE WEIGH HEAVILY UNQUOTE - QUOTE BUT FRANCE GATHERED BEHIND ITS NATURAL FRONTIERS, STRONG IN ITS GREAT HISTORY... CAPABLE OF ENSURING ITS OWN SECURITY, COULD STAND THE COMPARISON. UNQUOTE. MITTERRAND SAID HE DID NOT THINK THE EXTREME RIGHT IN GERMANY WERE EMERGING AS A SIGNIFICANT FORCE.

THE EC

7. IN A SHORT SECTION ON EC ISSUES, MITTERRAND COVERED THE CONSEQUENCES FOR THE EC OF GERMAN UNION, AND EMU. HE MADE THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

I. IF THERE WERE A SINGLE GERMAN STATE, A JURIDICIAL ACT OF ACCESSION TO THE EC BY EAST GERMANY WOULD NOT BE NEEDED. THE MEMBER STATES WOULD HAVE TO STUDY THE CONSEQUENCES AND DECIDE ON THE PRACTICAL DETAILS. DELORS WOULD BE SPEAKING ABOUT THIS SHORTLY.

II. INNER-GERMAN MONETARY UNION WOULD BE A GOOD THING IF IT ACCELERATED EMU, A BAD THING IF IT PUT IT BACK. KOHL HAD RECENTLY REPEATED ADENAUER'S DICTUM OF QUOTE A UNITED GERMANY UNDER A EUROPEAN ROOF UNQUOTE. THERE WAS NO REASON TO DOUBT THE WORD OF GERMAN LEADERS. THE ACCELERATION OF THE INNER-GERMAN PROCESS MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY THE ACCELERATION OF THE EUROPEAN PROCESS. WHY WAIT FOR DECEMBER TO START THE IGC? MITTERRAND WAS CONFIDENT THAT HAUGHEY AND ANDREOTTI WOULD SEE TO THIS.

THE ALLIANCE

8. ON NATO, AT ONE STAGE HE SAID QUOTE ALLIANCES ARE JUSTIFIED BECAUSE THEY HAVE ADVERSARIES. WHO WILL BE THE ADVERSARIES IN TEN YEARS? HOWEVER IN A LATER PASSAGE HE TAKES A MORE CLASSICAL LINE, SUPPORTING THE GENSCHER PLAN FOR THE NON-STATIONING OF NATO TROOPS ON GDR TERRITORY, RESISTING THE NEUTRALISATION OF GERMANY. ON THE STATIONING OF TROOPS ON GERMAN SOIL, HE REPLIED SIMPLY THAT MILITARY DISPOSITIONS WOULD FLOW FROM POLITICAL DECISIONS. WHEN ASKED WHETHER GERMANY MIGHT LEAVE THE INTEGRATED MILITARY STRUCTURE, MITTERRAND REPLIED THAT THE FRG WOULD ACT AS IT WISHED. QUOTE FRANCE HAS AN AUTONOMOUS STRATEGY BECAUSE SHE POSSESSES ATOMIC WEAPONS. GERMANY DOES NOT. UNQUOTE. MITTERRAND ALSO SUGGESTED THAT EVENTS IN THE EAST WERE BOLSTERING THE PROPOSAL IN HIS ELECTION LETTER TO ALL THE FRENCH FOR EUROPEAN COMMON DEFENCE.

EUROPEAN CONFEDERATION

9. ON THE 'EUROPEAN CONFEDERATION', MITTERRAND SAID THAT THE EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WHO HAD NEWLY FOUND THEIR LIBERTY AND INDEPENDENCE AND WERE TRYING TO RECONSTRUCT THEIR ECONOMIES WANTED TO BE NEITHER ISOLATED NOR ASSISTED (ASSISTE). THEY WOULD NOT ASPIRE, AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT, TO JOIN THE EC, AND THE COMMUNITY WAS NOT READY FOR THEM. THEY WERE UNLIKELY TO STAY IN CMEA. MITTERRAND RECALLED HIS IDEA OF A CONFEDERATION OF ALL EUROPEAN DEMOCRACIES IN A QUOTE JOINT AND PERMANENT ORGANISM UNQUOTE COVERING, TO BEGIN WITH, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL EXCHANGES AND MUTUAL SECURITY, WITH REGULAR MEETINGS OF FOREIGN MINISTERS. THIS WOULD OFFER THESE COUNTRIES A LARGER PERSPECTIVE, AND ENABLE THEM TO BECOME CONSCIOUS OF THEIR EUROPEAN IDENTITY AND THEIR NATURAL TIES WITH EACH OTHER IN AN INSTITUTION WHERE PARTNERS WERE EQUAL IN LAW.

COMMENT

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10. THE TEXT OF THE INTERVIEW WAS APPARENTLY GONE OVER CAREFULLY IN THE ELYSEE BEFORE IT WAS PUBLISHED, REFLECTING THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL DELICACY OF ITS ISSUES COVERED. WE SHALL HAVE TO FOLLOW UP THE ONE OR TWO EC RELATED POINTS ON WHICH MITTERRAND ADJUSTED FRENCH POSITIONS TO DATE.

11. POLITICALLY, MITTERRAND'S AIM WAS TO REASSURE GERMAN OPINION OF FRENCH SOLIDARITY AND UNDERSTANDING FOR THEIR ASPIRATIONS, WHILE FIRMLY ASSERTING FRANCE'S ROLE IN THE EXTERNAL ASPECTS OF THE GERMAN QUESTION - A DIFFICULT BALANCING ACT, BUT ONE WHICH AT FIRST READING IT LOOKS AS IF HE MAY HAVE ACHIEVED.

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