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MR RIDLEY'S RESIGNATION AND THE GERMANY SEMINAR

SUMMARY

1. EXTENSIVE MEDIA COVERAGE OF MR RIDLEY'S RESIGNATION. 'INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY' ARTICLE ON PRIME MINISTER'S SEMINAR ON GERMANY LESS FULLY REPORTED BY PRESS, BUT PROMINENT ON TELEVISION AND RADIO. MAIN IMPRESSION LEFT BY EDITORIALS IS THAT EPISODE REVEALS MORE ABOUT UK SELF-DOUBT AND INTERNAL DEBATE OVER EUROPEAN POLICY THAN IT DOES ABOUT TODAY'S GERMANY. PUBLIC COMMENT BY WAIGEL, MINISTER OF FINANCE.

DETAIL

2. IN THE FIRST SERIOUS REPORTS SINCE MR RIDLEY'S RESIGNATION WAS ANNOUNCED (THERE ARE FEW SUNDAY PAPERS HERE), ALL LEADING NEWSPAPERS TODAY CARRY A FACTUAL ARTICLE ON THE FRONT PAGE ABOUT MR RIDLEY'S RESIGNATION. SEVERAL ALSO HAVE CLOSELY ARGUED EDITORIALS. THE GERMANY SEMINAR MEMORANDUM IS REPORTED WITH EXTRACTS IN SEVERAL NEWSPAPERS. 'SPIEGEL' (CIRCULATION 980,000) HAS REPRODUCED ROUGHLY NINETY PER CENT OF THE TEXT. TV AND RADIO NEWS REPORTS YESTERDAY EVENING HAD PROMINENT COVERAGE OF THE SEMINAR STORY, INCLUDING FILM EXCERPTS OF YOUR COMMENTS 'ON THE RECORD'. ARD, THE FIRST GERMAN TV CHANNEL, COMMENTED THAT IT WAS MOST UNUSUAL FOR A FRIEND TO HOLD A SEMINAR TO DISSECT ANOTHER FRIEND IN THIS MANNER.

3. AMONG THE LEADING EDITORIALS, THE FRANKFURTER ALLGEMEINE CLAIMS THAT MR RIDLEY'S ARTICLE REFLECTS THE SPLIT IN THE CABINET ON EUROPEAN POLICY, AND SUGGESTS THAT THERE IS WIDESPREAD FEELING IN THE UK THAT THE PRIME MINISTER IS STILL OPPOSED TO THE PREDOMINANCE OF A UNITED GERMANY IN EUROPE. BUT THE CRISIS MAY SERVE THE MORE EUROPEAN APPROACH FAVOURED BY YOU AND THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER. YOUR VIEW IS CLEAR: THE UK'S ALLIANCE, PARTNERSHIP AND FRIENDSHIP WITH FRANCE AND GERMANY LIE AT THE HEART OF MODERN BRITISH POLICY.

4. DIE WELT TOO EMPHASISES THAT THE CRISIS OVER THE ARTICLE REFLECTS THE UK'S DIFFICULTY IN ADJUSTING TO ITS CURRENT POSITION IN THE WORLD. THE DIFFICULTIES THE UK IS NOW EXPERIENCING (EG WITH THE ECONOMY, UNEMPLOYMENT, TRANSPORT AND THE ENVIRONMENT) ARE MAKING THE BRITISH PEOPLE LOOK AROUND FOR SOMEONE ELSE TO BLAME. THERE HAS BEEN SOME PROGRESS OVER THE LAST FEW MONTHS IN THE UK'S APPROACH TOWARDS EUROPE: WHETHER ANY OF THIS WILL NOW CONTINUE REMAINS TO BE SEEN.

5. HANDELSBLATT ENLARGES ON THE THEME THAT THE CRISIS STEMS FROM A LOSS OF SELF CONFIDENCE. THE UK IS BESET BY PROBLEMS (QUOTING THE SAME EXAMPLE AS DIE WELT) AND HAS BEGUN TO LOSE FAITH IN ITS INSTITUTIONS (PARLIAMENT, THE COURTS AND THE POLICE). IT CAN NO LONGER RELY ON THE US/UK SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP TO BOOST ITS EGO, AND A LOSS OF NERVE IS NOT THEREFORE SURPRISING.

6. THE FRANKFURTER RUNDSCHAU EDITORIAL OPENS WITH A FULL QUOTATION OF YOUR COMMENT AT DITCHLEY PARK, BUT THEN QUOTES EXTENSIVELY FROM THE BRITISH PRESS ABOUT THE MIXED FEELINGS IN THE UK TOWARDS THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND GERMANY. IT ENDS WITH A REFERENCE TO THE ALLEGED CONTINUING USE OF THE DEROGATORY TERM 'THE FOURTH REICH' AMONG THE INNER CIRCLES OF WHITEHALL.

7. THE KOELNER STADT ANZEIGER ALSO COMMENTS THAT THE ARTICLE HAS BROUGHT OUT INTO THE OPEN DIVISIONS ON EUROPEAN POLICY, AND DOUBTS ABOUT GERMAN UNIFICATION. THE PRIME MINISTER'S SEMINAR IS DEPICTED AS REFLECTING HER OWN ANXIETIES. THESE ARE SHARED BY THE FRENCH AND AMERICANS, BUT THEY HAVE CONCLUDED THAT THE BEST WAY TO DEAL WITH THEM IS TO ANCHOR GERMANY MORE FIRMLY INTO EUROPE. THE UK'S POLICY TOWARDS GERMANY AND EUROPE IS INTERNALLY CONTRADICTORY.

8. THE ONLY MINISTERIAL COMMENT SO FAR HAS COME FROM WAIGEL. ADDRESSING THE CSU PARTY CONFERENCE ON 14 JULY, HE DEPARTED FROM THE PREPARED TEXT OF HIS CONCLUDING SPEECH TO DENOUNCE THE 'INSULTS' OF AN 'ENGLISH MINISTER'.

COMMENT

9. THE APPEARANCE IN 'SPIEGEL' IN EXTENSO OF THE SEMINAR RECORD MAY WELL STIMULATE FURTHER MEDIA COMMENT. WITH KOHL AND GENSCHER STILL IN MOSCOW IT IS HARD AT THIS STAGE TO GAUGE THE FULL POLITICAL REACTION.

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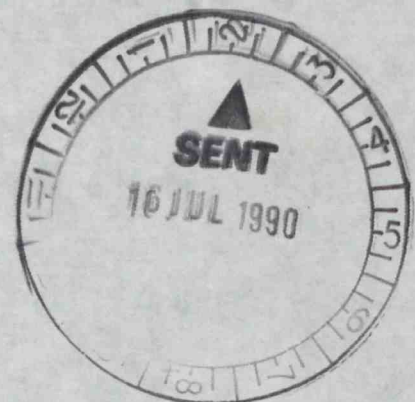
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PAGE 3
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