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FRAME GENERAL

FRENCH EC POLICY: DEBATE IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
SUMMARY

1. CRYSTALLISATION OF GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION THINKING ON EPU AND EMU. GOVERNMENTS' FEDERALIST RHETORIC NOT BORNE OUT BY SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES ON FOREIGN AND DEFENCE POLICY COORDINATION AND INSTITUTIONAL REFORM. GENUINE FEDERALISTS IN A MINORITY. GOVERNMENT REAFFIRMATION OF GOAL OF CENTRAL BANK AND SINGLE CURRENCY BY 1996-98. MAJORITY SUPPORT FOR SINGLE CURRENCY, BUT RPR FAVOUR PARALLEL CURRENCY.

DETAIL

2. A THINLY ATTENDED DEBATE ON EUROPE IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY YESTERDAY WAS OPENED BY DUMAS. HE DESCRIBED THE GOAL OF GOVERNMENT POLICY AS TRANSFORMING THE EC INTO A FEDERATION BASED ON A SINGLE MARKET, EMU AND EPU. BUT WHEN HE GOT INTO THE DETAIL OF GOVERNMENT THINKING ON THE POLICY COORDINATION ASPECTS OF EPU, IT WAS CLEAR THAT THEIR OBJECTIVES FELL FAR SHORT OF WHAT WOULD NORMALLY BE ASSOCIATED WITH A FEDERATION. HE SAID THAT THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT WANTED A COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY ON ISSUES WHERE THE INTERESTS OF MEMBER STATES CONVERGED, BUT CONTINUING AUTONOMY FOR THE INDIVIDUALISTS ON ISSUES WHERE NATIONAL INTERESTS WERE AT STAKE. HE INSTANCED HUMAN RIGHTS, DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION, AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO E. EUROPE AS EXAMPLES OF ISSUES WHERE CONVERGING INTERESTS MADE A COMMON POLICY POSSIBLE. IN THE CASE OF THE GULF CRISIS CONVERGING INTERESTS HAD MADE POSSIBLE A COMMON POLICY AT THE UN, BUT FRANCE HAD BEEN FREE TO PURSUE A NATIONAL POLICY 'WHERE APPROPRIATE' THIS WAS AS IT SHOULD BE. EC COORDINATION SHOULD COMPLEMENT AND REINFORCE NATIONAL POLICIES, NOT REPLACE THEM.

3. ON THE DEFENCE/SECURITY SIDE, HE REFERRED APPROVINGLY TO THE COORDINATING ROLE OF THE WEU SINCE 2 AUGUST. WEU SHOULD BECOME THE PILLAR OF A COMMON APPROACH TO SECURITY POLICY, WHILE DEFENCE POLICY SHOULD BE LEFT TO MEMBER STATES.

EMU

4. DUMAS SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S OBJECTIVE WAS A STAGE 2 STARTING ON 1 JANUARY 1993 AND LEADING WITHIN 3-5 YEARS TO A CENTRAL BANK AND A SINGLE CURRENCY. THERE WOULD BE OBSTACLES, BUT FRANCE COULD COUNT ON THE HELP OF KOHL AND GENSCHER TO OVERCOME THEM. THE UK DECISION TO JOIN THE ERM WAS WELCOME, ALBEIT OVERDUE. THE FRENCH SAW IN IT A SIGN OF GOOD WILL AND A WISH NO LONGER TO GO IT ALONE. THEY WOULD ACCORDINGLY DO WHAT THEY COULD TO HELP THE UK ALONG THE ROAD TO EMU. BUT IF THEY WERE MISTAKEN, THEY WOULD NOT BE DETERRED FROM PURSUING THAT GOAL.

INSTITUTIONAL REFORM

5. DUMAS EMPHASISED THE PRIMACY OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL IN THE GOVERNMENT'S APPROACH ('THE ONLY BODY ABLE TO GIVE THE UNION ITS EXTERNAL DIMENSION AND ASSUME THE LEGITIMACY OF ITS ACTION VIS-A-VIS NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS') IT SHOULD BE GIVEN ITS OWN SECRETARIAT. SOME EXTENSION OF QUALIFIED MAJORITY VOTING (UNSPECIFIED) WAS DESIRABLE. HE IMPLIED A CONTINUING LACK OF ENTHUSIASM FOR A MAJOR INCREASE IN THE POWERS OF THE EP (LIMITED RIGHT TO INITIATE LEGISLATION, POWER OF APPROVAL OF A NEW COMMISSION, AND REINFORCEMENT OF THEIR CONTROL OVER THE COMMISSION WERE OPTIONS THE GOVERNMENT WAS READY TO CONSIDER) OR FOR A REFORM OF FRENCH SCRUTINY PROCEDURES WHICH WOULD GIVE NATIONAL PARLIAMENTARIANS THE TEETH THEY STILL LACK. HE CONFIRMED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD ABANDONED THE IDEA OF A SECOND CHAMBER IN STRASBOURG (IT WAS INTELLECTUALLY ATTRACTIVE, BUT IMPRACTICAL). INSTEAD THEY WOULD ADVOCATE A CONGRESS OR DIET OF NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARIANS, TO MEET TWO OR THREE TIMES A YEAR TO DEBATE THE COMMUNITY ECONOMIC AND MONETARY ISSUES AND MAJOR FOREIGN/SECURITY POLICY ISSUES, ON WHICH THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL WOULD HAVE MADE THE STRATEGIC DECISIONS.

6. DUMAS EXPRESSED FIRM BUT VAGUE SUPPORT FOR SPANISH IDEAS ON COMMON EUROPEAN CITIZENSHIP. THERE SHOULD BE A SOLEMN CHARTER WHICH RECOGNISED THE DUAL RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUALS AS CITIZENS OF INDIVIDUAL MEMBER STATES AND OF THE EC.

7. DUMAS CONCLUDED BY EXPRESSING CONFIDENCE THAT THE GOALS OF EMU AND EPU COULD BE ACHIEVED AS LONG AS FRANCE AND THE FRG CONTINUED TO SERVE AS THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION (WHICH HE WOULD DO HIS BEST TO ENSURE). THEY HOPED ALL 12 MEMBER STATES WOULD SIGN A NEW TREATY, BUT WOULD NOT ALLOW UNANIMITY TO BE A PRETEXT FOR DOING NOTHING.

OPPOSITION STATEMENTS

8. STATEMENTS BY OPPOSITION SPOKESMAN CONFIRMED THAT ENTHUSIASM FOR A FEDERAL VISION IS STRONGEST AT THE CENTRE OF FRENCH POLITICS, BUT ABSENT AT EITHER EXTREME. THE CENTRIST CDS WANTED A EUROPEAN DIPLOMATIC SERVICE AND INTEGRATION OF NATIONAL DEFENCE FORCES IN A EUROPEAN FORCE. THEY WERE OPPOSED TO ANY ENLARGEMENT UNTIL A FEDERAL EUROPE HAD BEEN CREATED. THEY WANTED A SINGLE CURRENCY.

9. THE OTHER GROUPS CONSTITUTING THE UDF ALSO WANTED A SINGLE CURRENCY, BUT WERE OPPOSED TO A COMMON ECONOMIC POLICY: MEMBER STATES SHOULD RETAIN FISCAL AND BUDGETARY AUTONOMY. THEY EMPHASISED SUBSIDIARITY AND DECENTRALISATION. IN THEIR FEDERAL VISION ONLY 10 PERCENT OF TOTAL PUBLIC SPENDING WOULD BE UNDERTAKEN AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL. A COMMON DEFENCE POLICY WAS NECESSARY ONLY IN RELATION TO COMMON THREATS.

Chirac
10. THE RPR WANTED A PARALLEL NOT A SINGLE CURRENCY. TRANSFERS OF SOVEREIGNTY TO THE CENTRAL WERE ACCEPTABLE ONLY IF ESSENTIAL NATIONAL COMPETENCES, EG DEFENCE, WERE MAINTAINED. THE WEU SHOULD BE THE PILLAR OF A EUROPEAN DEFENCE POLICY WITHIN NATO. ANY DEEPENING OF THE EC SHOULD NOT EXCLUDE WIDENING: ALL EUROPEAN DEMOCRACIES SHOULD BE WELCOMED ONCE THEY WERE READY FOR MEMBERSHIP. THE FUNDAMENTAL AIM SHOULD BE A UNION OF NATION STATES.

11. THE PC WANTED PEACEFUL COOPERATION BETWEEN SOVEREIGN NATION STATES, FROM THE ATLANTIC TO THE URALS.

COMMENT

12. THIS DEBATE CRYSTALLISED CURRENT GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION THINKING ON EUROPE. IT PROVIDED THE CLEAREST CONFIRMATION YET THAT FOR THE GOVERNMENT POLITICAL UNION ESSENTIALLY MEANS ENHANCED FOREIGN POLICY COORDINATION AN OVERARCHING ROLE FOR THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL, LIMITED EXTENSION OF QUALIFIED MAJORITY VOTING, AND AN INSTITUTIONAL REFORM THAT WOULD NOT ALTER THE EXISTING BALANCE. THEY DO NOT (NOT) BELIEVE IN SUBORDINATING FRENCH FOREIGN AND SECURITY INTEREST TO A COMMON EUROPEAN POLICY. WHERE THERE ARE NATURAL COMMON INTERESTS, THESE CAN BE CO-ORDINATED. BUT WHERE ONE COUNTRY HAS ITS OWN INTERESTS, IT SHOULD BE FREE TO PURSUE THEM INDEPENDENTLY. NOWITHSTANDING THE GOVERNMENTS FEDERALIST RHETORIC THE GENUINE FEDERALISTS ARE CLEARLY IN A MINORITY.

13. AS TO EMU, SUPPORT FOR A PARALLEL CURRENCY IS HOLDING UP IN THE RPR, BUT A SINGLE CURRENCY CONTINUES TO HAVE THE SUPPORT OF A

MAJORITY.

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