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WITHDRAWAL OF FRENCH TROOPS FROM GERMANY

1. OVER THE PAST 24 HOURS SENIOR FRENCH OFFICIALS, INCLUDING THE POLITICAL DIRECTOR DUFOURCQ HAVE TOLD US THAT WE SHOULD TAKE CAREFUL NOTE OF THE LANGUAGE USED BY PRESIDENT MITTERRAND IN HIS INTERVIEW WITH TWO GERMAN TELEVISION CHANNELS (ARD AND ZDF) OF 2 OCTOBER, AND ESPECIALLY HIS REFERENCE TO EUROPEAN DEFENCE.

2. OUR TRANSLATION OF THE RELEVANT PASSAGE OF THE FRENCH TEXT IS:
"QUESTION: GERMANY WILL HAVE ITS SOVEREIGNTY AND THE TROOPS OF THE VICTORS OF THE SECOND WAR WILL LEAVE GERMANY. FRANCE IS IN A DIFFERENT SITUATION, SINCE IT HAS A JOINT BRIGADE WITH THE GERMANS. THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT ASKED YOU TO LEAVE A FEW TROOPS. WHY DID YOU NOT AGREE ?

MITTERRAND: "REALLY, I DO NOT THINK IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE I AM ENTIRELY READY TO ARRANGE A GENERALLY ACCEPTABLE TIMETABLE. IT HAS ALREADY BEEN SAID THAT HALF OF THESE TROOPS WOULD BE BROUGHT BACK TO FRANCE IN THE COMING TWO YEARS. WE COULD PERFECTLY WELL LOOK TOGETHER AT THE TIMESCALE. ALL THIS MUST BE DECIDED IN HARMONY. I AM NOT LOOKING TO IMPOSE A DECISION. I SIMPLY WANT IT UNDERSTOOD THAT THIS WOULD BE WISE. DOES A LARGE COUNTRY LIKE YOURS NEED FOREIGN TROOPS ON ITS SOIL, EVEN IF THESE ARE THE TROOPS OF FRIENDS ? IF IT (IE GERMANY) JUDGES THAT NECESSARY IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE EUROPEAN DEFENCE, THAT IS QUITE ANOTHER MATTER, (BUT) IT WOULD REQUIRE A NEW AGREEMENT, IT WOULD REQUIRE THAT ONE SPOKE CLEARLY ABOUT IT ... (REFERENCE TO MISREPRESENTATION OF FRENCH POSITION IN THE GERMAN PRESS) ... IF ONE WISHES TO BUILD TOGETHER THIS EUROPEAN SYSTEM, WE CANNOT LIVE WITH THE BALANCE OF FORCES OF THE POST-WAR PERIOD - THE VICTOR AND THE VANQUISHED - ONE MUST CREATE NEW RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EQUAL FRIENDLY AND LINKED (ASSOCIES) COUNTRIES."

COMMENT

MITTERRAND CLEARLY WISHED TO SHADE THE POSITION HE TOOK IN MUNICH LAST MONTH, AND NOW SEEMS TO HAVE OPENED UP THE WAY :

- (A) FOR FLEXIBILITY OVER THE INITIAL PERIOD OF WITHDRAWAL
- (B) FOR THE POSSIBLE LONGER TERM PRESENCE OF SOME FRENCH TROOPS IN

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GERMANY, BUT UNDER A NEW AGREEMENT, WHICH MUST BE SEEN TO BE SET
FIRMLY IN THE CONTEXT OF QUOTE EUROPEAN DEFENCE UNQUOTE

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