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HAMILTON FOR PRIME MINISTERS PARTY

MITTERRAND/BUSH SUMMIT, MARTINIQUE, 14 MARCH

SUMMARY

1. ELYSEE REGARD THIS AS AN EXCEPTIONALLY SUCCESSFUL MEETING. DISCUSSION OF MIDDLE EAST AND EUROPEAN MATTERS. PRESS CONFERENCE ATMOSPHERE NOTABLY WARM IN SPITE OF DISAGREEMENT ON SOME DETAILS. FRANCE READ BUSH AS READY TO BE FLEXIBLE AND WISHING TO HOLD GULF ALLIANCE TOGETHER/POST WAR.

DETAIL

2. EXTENSIVE COVERAGE IN THE FRENCH PRESS OF THE MITTERRAND/BUSH MEETING IN MARTINIQUE ON 14 MARCH CONCENTRATES LARGELY ON THE EXCELLENT ATMOSPHERICS. TAKING THEIR CUE FROM VEDRINE'S (ELYSEE SPOKESMAN) PRE-TRIP BRIEFING, ALL PAPERS POINT TO A HEALTHIER FRANCO-AMERICAN RELATIONSHIP IN WHICH FRANCE CAN DISCUSS DIFFERENCES OF POLICY WHERE THESE EXIST WITHOUT FEELING THE NEED TO EMPHASISE FRENCH 'SPECIFICITY' FOR THE SAKE OF IT. COMMENTATORS TALK OF AN IMPORTANT PAGE BEING TURNED.
3. THE SUBSTANCE IS BEST SUMMED UP BY THE LIBERATION (INDEPENDENT LEFT) HEADLINE 'UNION WITH TWO VOICES'. COVERAGE FOCUSES ENTIRELY ON THE MIDDLE EAST. PRESIDENT BUSH'S MEASURED REFERENCE TO A PEACE CONFERENCE IS SEEN AS A STEP TOWARDS THE FRENCH POSITION, BUT THE DIFFERENCES OF NUANCE ON CONDITIONS FOR A CEASE-FIRE, THE ROLE OF THE PLO AND A PALESTINIAN STATE ARE ALSO NOTED.
4. LANXADE (MITTERRAND'S DEFENCE ADVISER) BIANCO (ELYSEE SECRETARY GENERAL) AND MOREL (DIPLOMATIC ADVISER) - ALL OF WHOM ACCOMPANIED MITTERRAND TO MARTINIQUE - CAME TO LUNCH TODAY. THEY CONFIRMED PRESS REPORTS OF THE EXCELLENT RAPPORT BETWEEN BUSH AND MITTERRAND, AND WERE STRUCK BY THE WAY IN WHICH BUSH WENT OUT OF HIS WAY TO ASK MITTERRAND'S VIEWS (AND GAVE THE IMPRESSION OF LISTENING TO THE

REPLY). BUSH WAS CLEARLY ANXIOUS TO CEMENT THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE FRENCH PRESIDENT BUILT UP OVER THE WAR. FOR THEIR PART, MITTERRAND'S SENIOR ADVISERS WERE HAPPY ENOUGH TO TALK AT LUNCH OF A GENUINELY 'NEW STAGE' IN BILATERAL RELATIONS.

5. IN WHAT FOLLOWS, 'MOREL' IS SHORTHAND FOR THE ELYSEE, QUAI AND MATIGNON GUESTS AS A WHOLE. MOREL SAID THAT THE TWO MAIN TOPICS WERE MIDDLE EAST AND EUROPEAN SECURITY.

6. ON THE GULF, MOREL TOLD US THAT THERE HAD BEEN A LONG AND GOOD DISCUSSION. THE PRINCIPAL IMPRESSION THE FRENCH TOOK AWAY WAS THAT BUSH WAS DETERMINED NOT TO LET THE ALLIANCE FALL APART, BUT TO USE ITS POSITION OF STRENGTH TO SOLVE SOME OF THE REGION'S PROBLEMS. ON SADDAM HIMSELF, THE FRENCH HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT BUSH'S POSITION WAS SO STRENGTHENED BY THE VICTORY THAT HE WAS READY TO LEAVE SADDAM TO WRITE HIMSELF OFF. (MOREL COMMENTED THAT, AT SEVERAL POINTS DURING THE GULF CRISIS, BUSH HAD RISKED LOSING CREDIBILITY BY MAKING THE CONFRONTATION WITH SADDAM TOO PERSONAL). BUSH HAD TOLD MITTERRAND THAT ONE COULD NOT TAKE IT FOR GRANTED THAT SADDAM WOULD NOT SURVIVE, AND THE AMERICANS WERE NOT GOING TO INVOLVE THEMSELVES IN IRAQ (AS THEY HAD IN IRAN) AND ENGINEER SADDAM'S DOWNFALL. THERE WAS NO SERIOUS DISCUSSION OF THE SANCTIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTIONS. THE MAIN POINT PUSHED BY THE AMERICANS WAS AT THE PRESS CONFERENCE WAS SADDAM'S USE OF HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS AGAINST KURDS, ON WHICH BUSH HAD SAID HE WOULD NOT AGREE TO A CEASE-FIRE UNTIL THIS STOPPED.

7. ON WIDER MIDDLE EAST QUESTIONS, BUSH HAD BEEN CAREFUL NOT TO COMMIT HIMSELF BEFORE BAKER HAD BRIEFED HIM ON HIS MIDDLE EAST TOUR. MITTERRAND DID NOT PRESS THE CASE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, AND WAS WILLING TO LEAVE A SIX MONTH WINDOW FOR THE AMERICANS TO MAKE PROGRESS BY PRESSURE ON THE ISRAELIS. BUT MITTERRAND HAD MADE CLEAR THAT THE PERIOD OF GRACE WAS NOT INDEFINITE. HE COULD NOT ALLOW THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE TO DROP OFF THE AGENDA IT WOULD REEMERGE AS A COMPONENT OF RENEWED EUROPEAN ACTIVITY IF THE AMERICANS DID NOT MAKE PROGRESS.

8. ON EUROPEAN DEFENCE AND SECURITY, MOREL SAID THAT MITTERRAND (UNPROMPTED BY HIS OFFICIALS) RAISED THE US DEMARCHE OF 21 FEBRUARY, CALLING IT 'UNACCEPTABLE'. BUSH DENIED ALL KNOWLEDGE OF THE PAPER, AND IN THE COURSE OF THE SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSION, ASKED WHO HAD WRITTEN IT. AT THIS POINT MOREL SAID THAT HE HAD HAD TO SHOP BARTHOLEMEW. MOREL SAID THAT MITTERRAND HAD TOLD BUSH THAT HE REGRETTED THE APPARENT LACK OF US TRUST IN WHAT THE EUROPEANS WERE

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UP TO. FRANCE HAD NO WISH TO SET UP A COMPETING EUROPEAN STRUCTURE TO NATO. NATO AND POLITICAL UNION WERE NOT ALTERNATIVES. THE FORMER WAS ACTUAL, THE LATTER ONLY POTENTIAL. IT SHOULD THEREFORE BE POSSIBLE FOR THE TWO TO BE COMPATIBLE. MOREL CLAIMED THAT THE PRESIDENT ACCEPTED THIS CALMLY, BUT THAT THERE WAS LITTLE DETAILED DISCUSSION.

9. LANXADE TOLD ME, HOWEVER, THAT MITTERRAND HAD TWICE REFERRED TO THE NEED FOR EUROPE TO PREPARE ITSELF AGAINST THE DAY, WHICH MIGHT NOT COME FOR TWENTY YEARS BUT COULD COME SOONER. WHEN THE US MIGHT DISENGAGE FROM EUROPE - US TROOP REDUCTIONS WERE CLEARLY UNDERWAY AND EUROPEANS NEEDED TO BE READY. BUSH HAD APPARENTLY REACTED STRONGLY AGAINST THIS LINE OF ARGUMENT.

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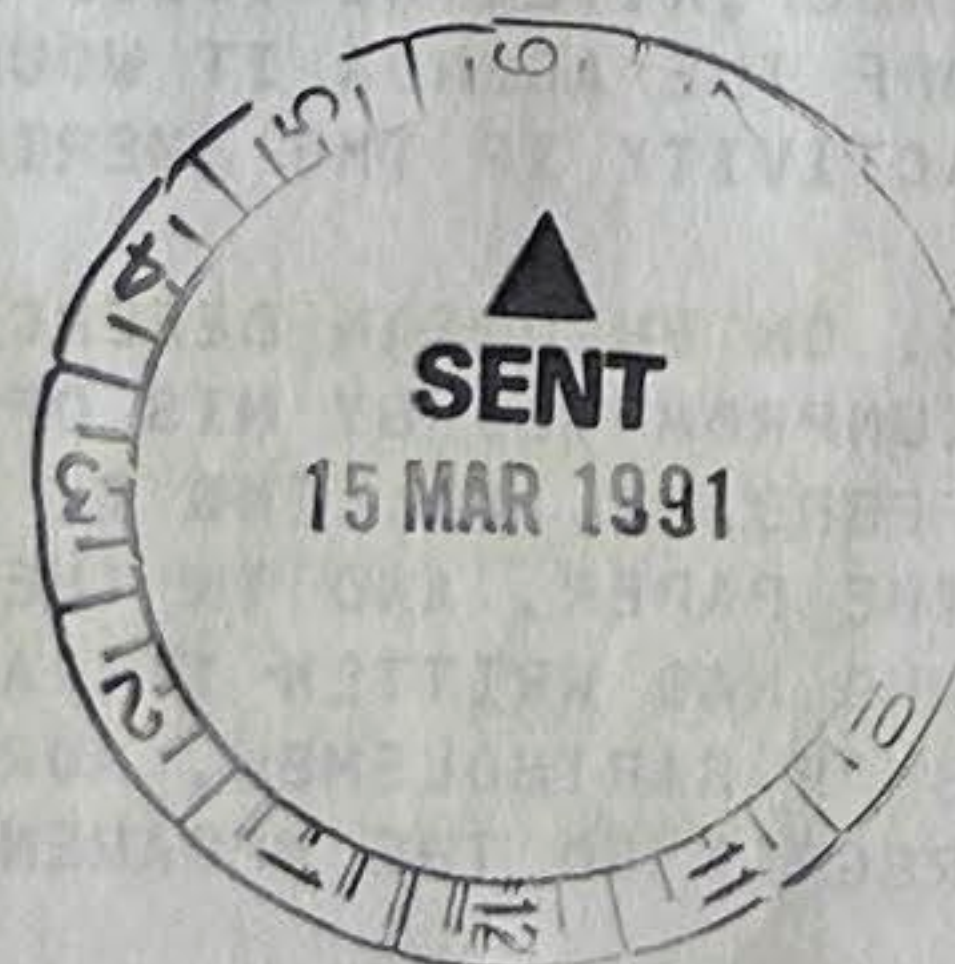
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