

GRS 625

UNCLASSIFIED

FM PARIS 221810Z MAR 84

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 376 OF 22 MARCH

INFO PRIORITY UKREP BRUSSELS, ROUTINE OTHER EC POSTS, WASHINGTON
INFO SAVING LISBON, MADRID, UKDEL STRASBOURG, UKMIS GENEVA, UKDEL
NATO

MS
interesting.
HR 27/3

MY TELNO 370: EUROPEAN COUNCIL: FRENCH PRESS REACTION

SUMMARY

1. PRESIDENT MITTERRAND'S TELEVISION INTERVIEW LAST NIGHT (MY TELNO 373) IS HAVING A CALMING INFLUENCE ON MEDIA PRESENTATION OF POST-SUMMIT ISSUES. ALTHOUGH TELEVISION, RADIO AND THE REGIONAL PRESS ALL CONTINUE TO LAY BLAME AT BRITAIN'S DOOR, THERE ARE FEWER CALLS FOR BRITAIN TO BE PUT IN QUARANTINE.

DETAIL

2. ALTHOUGH LE QUOTIDIEN (RIGHT-WING) PREDICTS THAT BRITAIN'S CONTINUED MEMBERSHIP WILL BE AT ISSUE AT THE JUNE SUMMIT, THE BALANCE OF COMMENT IN THE PARIS PRESS TILTS IN FAVOUR OF TAKING BRITISH VIEWS FULLY INTO ACCOUNT AND RECOGNISING THAT EUROPE HAS CHANGED. LE MATIN (SOCIALIST DAILY) WRITES THAT GOVERNMENTS SHOULD FACE THE CONSEQUENCES OF HAVING BRITAIN AS A MEMBER, WHILE BRITAIN SHOULD BE FACED WITH ITS RESPONSIBILITIES. THE COMMENTARY CONCLUDES THAT A UNITED SOLUTION IS NEEDED BECAUSE THE AFFAIR OF THE EUROMISSILES HAS REMINDED US THAT 40 YEARS AFTER THE WAR EUROPE REMAINS THE MOST DANGEROUS CONTINENT OF THE PLANET. THE SAME PAPER PUBLISHES INTERVIEWS WITH COUVE DE MURVILLE AND JOBERT WHO BOTH ARGUE THAT A COMMUNITY WITHOUT BRITAIN IS NO LONGER POSSIBLE, AND THAT THE PROBLEMS MUST BE SETTLED ONCE FOR ALL.

3. THE RIGHT-WING PAPERS, OFTEN REPORTING COMMENT FROM OPPOSITION POLITICIANS, EMPHASISE THE DIFFICULTIES OF FRENCH FARMERS AND PRESIDENT MITTERRAND'S FAILURE TO TAKE EUROPE FORWARD. FIGARO WRITES THAT THE SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT IS DISTRESSINGLY REMISCENT OF THE FRENCH RUGBY TEAM AGAINST SCOTLAND, CONFUSING ACTION AND AGITATION. ON THE OTHER HAND, LIBERATION (INDEPENDENT LEFT-WING) CLAIMS THAT MRS. THATCHER, THANKS TO HER INTRANSIGENCE, HAS REMOVED A SIZEABLE THORN FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S FOOT . . . FRANCOIS MITTERRAND'S FIRMNESS IN FACE OF MRS THATCHER MAKES HIS IMAGE MORE CREDIBLE.

4. THERE IS AGAIN AN UNUSUAL READINESS TO ACCEPT THAT BRITAIN HAS A CASE. AS YESTERDAY, LIBERATION LEADS THE FIELD IN THIS RESPECT. IT REMINDS ITS READERS HOW THE BRITISH CONTRIBUTION BENEFITS COMMUNITY FARMERS: FRANCOIS GUILLAUME (THE FARMERS' LEADER) IS TAKING GREAT FINANCIAL RISKS WHEN HE CALLS FOR BRITISH WITHDRAWAL. IT ADDS THAT THE ULTIMATE ARGUMENT IN REFUTING A POSSIBLE BRITISH DEPARTURE IS THE GEOPOLITICAL ONE. LIBERATION ALSO POINTS OUT THAT BRITAIN MADE SIGNIFICANT CONCESSIONS AT THE SUMMIT. IT EXPLAINS THE UNDERLYING BRITISH ARGUMENTS (EG MONEY FROM BRUSSELS GOES ONLY TO FARMING AND STEEL, BOTH SECTORS OF THE PAST) AND SAYS THAT MRS THATCHER IS JUSTIFIED IN CLAIMING THAT SHE IS FOR THE EUROPE OF THE FUTURE.

5. TODAY'S LE MONDE IS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT PRESIDENT MITTERRAND'S AVOWED AIM OF ACHIEVING A SOLUTION IN A SPECIAL COUNCIL OR AT FONTAINEBLEAU. IT IS NOT CLEAR HOW WHAT WAS NOT POSSIBLE YESTERDAY WOULD BECOME POSSIBLE TOMORROW. UNLESS, OF COURSE, IT IS BY GIVING WAY TO LONDON'S DEMANDS, AS FRANCE WAS WITHIN A HAIR'S BREADTH OF DOING AT BRUSSELS. THE FRENCH DESIRE NOT TO RUSH THINGS GIVES THE BRITISH HEAD OF GOVERNMENT THE BEST AND SIMPLEST OF WEAPONS: TIME. AS THE ENGLISH PROVERB VERY APPROPRIATELY SAYS, TIME IS MONEY.

FCO PASS SAVING ADDRESSEES

FRETWELL

Frame General
ECD (I)

(REPEATED AS REQUESTED)