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TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 2223 OF 21 JULY

INFO SAVING HM CONSULATES GENERAL IN THE US, EC POSTS, NATO POSTS
AND EAST EUROPEAN POSTS

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION

1. THE DEMOCRATS HAD A GOOD CONVENTION IN PARTY TERMS. THEY EMERGED FROM IT MORE UNITED, MORE CHEERFUL AND WITH MORE FIRE IN THEIR BELLIES THAN WHEN THEY WENT IN. BUT NOW THAT THE TUMULT AND THE SHOUTING HAVE DIED IN SAN FRANCISCO, IT IS TIME TO TRY AND SIFT THE EPHEMERAL AND THE EUPHORIC FROM THE CONTINUING REALITIES OF ELECTORAL ARITHMETIC AND NATIONAL MOOD.
2. THE FIRST POINT TO STRESS IS THAT WITH THE NOMINATION OF MONDALE (MINNESOTA) AND FERRARO (NEW YORK) TO RUN AGAINST REAGAN (CALIFORNIA) AND BUSH (TEXAS) WE HAVE A STRAIGHT FROSTBELT VERSUS SUNBELT, SMOKE STACK VERSUS SUNRISE INDUSTRY TICKET. THIS MUST WORK AGAINST THE DEMOCRATS IN SEVERAL WAYS. FIRST, THE POPULATION CENTRE OF THE UNITED STATES IS MOVING STEADILY WEST AND SOUTH: IT CROSSED THE MISSISSIPPI IN 1982. DEMOGRAPHY IS AGAINST THE MONDALE/FERRARO TICKET.
3. SECONDLY, THE ETHOS OF THE SUNBELT, WITH ITS EMPHASIS ON OPPORTUNITY, SELF-RELIANCE AND NON-UNIONISATION, IS RADICALLY DIFFERENT FROM THE ETHOS OF THE FROSTBELT WITH ITS EMPHASIS ON COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY, UNION MEMBERSHIP AND HIGH GOVERNMENT SPENDING, A VARIANT OF CHURCHILL'S 1951 CHOICE BETWEEN LADDERS AND QUEUES. THE VALUES OF THE DEMOCRATS ARE ROOTED IN THE PAST, WHICH IS ONE REASON WHY HART, A SUNBELT DEMOCRAT FROM COLORADO, FAILED TO CAPTURE THE MOOD OF THE CONVENTION WITH HIS APPEAL FOR NEW POLICIES. THE UNIONS WISELY KEPT A LOW PROFILE AT SAN FRANCISCO. SO LONG AS THE REAL ECONOMY POWERS AHEAD, AND DESPITE THE WARNING OF THE FINANCIAL MARKETS ITS SHOW NO SIGN OF FALTERING BEFORE NOVEMBER- THE MOOD OF THE COUNTRY IS AGAINST THE MONDALE/FERRARO TICKET.
4. THERE WERE, OF COURSE, A NUMBER OF BREAK-THROUGHS NOTABLY THE CHOICE OF GERALDINE FERRARO AS MONDALE'S RUNNING MATE. TO HAVE A WOMAN ON THE PRESIDENTIAL TICKET IS AN ADVANCE AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IS DELIGHTED. BUT IT IS REALLY NO BIG DEAL. THERE ARE WOMEN SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES, ONE WOMAN GOVERNOR AND A WOMAN ON THE SUPREME-COURT. IF THERE HAS SO FAR BEEN NO WOMAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IT IS BECAUSE SO FAR THERE HAS BEEN NO WOMAN WITH THE AMBITION, SINGLENESS OF MIND, TIME AND ENERGY TO SUBMIT TO THE GRUELLING PROCESSES OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATURE. IN TIME THERE WILL BE AND FERRARO WILL HAVE SHOWN THEM THE WAY. BUT THAT IS FOR THE FUTURE.
5. MEANWHILE THERE IS THE GENDER GAP. MORE WOMEN FAVOUR MONDALE THAN REAGAN AND IN A COUNTRY WHERE THE TURNOUT IS APPALLINGLY LOW (A LITTLE OVER 50 PERCENT) THE MOBILISATION OF THE WOMEN'S VOTE

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COULD REPRESENT A CONSIDERABLE BONUS FOR THE DEMOCRATS. AS AGAINST THAT, THERE WILL BE A PARTIAL MOBILISATION OF THE MALE CHAUVINIST PIG VOTE AGAINST FERRARO. SOME BASIC LACK OF INTEREST BY WOMEN IN POLITICAL ISSUES IS DEMONSTRATED BY THEIR PROVIDING THE LARGER PROPORTION OF "DON'T KNOWS" IN PUBLIC OPINION POLLS. MOREOVER THE MONDALE CAMP CAN NOT ALLOW THEIR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE TO BE OUTSHONE AT THE HUSTINGS BY THE VICE-PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE. SO A CONSIDERED VERDICT MUST BE THAT FERRARO WILL BE A HELP ON THE TICKET BUT NOT A DECISIVE ONE.

6. THE SECOND IMPORTANT BREAKTHROUGH HAS BEEN FOR THE BLACKS BY JESSE JACKSON. BLACKS ARE ALMOST 100 PERCENT DEMOCRAT BUT HAVE BEEN THE MOST APATHETIC OF ALL THE MINORITIES. JACKSON HAS SUCCEEDED IN GETTING MORE TO REGISTER AND MAY WELL SUCCEED IN GETTING MORE TO VOTE. BUT WHEREAS WOMEN, ALTHOUGH CURIOUSLY CONSIDERED A MINORITY IN POLITICAL TERMS, IN FACT REPRESENT OVER 50 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE, THE BLACKS ARE A GENUINE MINORITY, REPRESENTING ONLY ABOUT 11 PERCENT OF THE ELECTORATE. THEY COULD MAKE A USEFUL DIFFERENCE FOR THE DEMOCRATS. BUT EVEN THIS IS NOT WITHOUT ITS PITFALLS. AN UGLY FEATURE AT SAN FRANCISCO WAS THE SIGHT AND SOUND OF JACKSON'S RADICALISED BLACKS BOOING ANDY YOUNG, THE BLACK MAYOR OF ATLANTA, WHO HAS COME UP THE ALTERNATIVE WAY OF APPEALING TO BLACK AND WHITE VOTERS ALIKE. SO THE MORE JACKSON MOBILISES THE BLACKS, THE GREATER THE LIKELIHOOD OF A WHITE BACKLASH, PARTICULARLY IN THE SOUTH AND OF A JEWISH BACKLASH IN THE EASTERN CITIES. THE MONDALE/FERRARO TICKET LOOKS IN FACT TO BE A RECIPE FOR LOSING THE SOUTH FOR THE DEMOCRATS. THE CHANCES OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNOR HUNT OF NORTH CAROLINA BEATING THE INCUMBANT REPUBLICAN SENATOR JESSE HELMS MUST THEREBY BE LESSENED.

7. THE DEMOCRATS ARE NOT FINDING IT EASY TO IDENTIFY THE MAIN ISSUES FOR THEIR CAMPAIGN ON WHICH THEY CAN HOPE TO GET OUT NOT ONLY THEIR OWN VOTE BUT THE ALL-IMPORTANT UNCOMMITTED. THE ECONOMY OFFERS LITTLE, ALTHOUGH THE BUDGET DEFICIT AND "FAIRNESS" ARE BEING WELL-WORKED: AND KENNEDY'S LINE THAT ANOTHER 1929 COULD BE JUST AROUND THE CORNER MAY EMERGE MORE AS TIME GOES ON. THE TEFLON FACTOR HAS SO FAR MADE ATTACKS ON REAGAN'S AGE AND COMPETANCE FAIL TO STICK. THE PARTIES AGREE THAT AMERICA MUST BE STRONG: THEY DISAGREE ONLY ON "LOW STRONG" SO THE ABSENCE OF REALLY ATTRACTIVE DEMOCRATIC THEMES IS DRIVING THEM, IN THE TEETH OF MOST CONVENTIONAL WISDOM, TO EMPHASISE FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES. AND ON SEVERAL OF THESE THE PRESIDENT, WITH HIS ACCEPTANCE OF TALKS WITH THE RUSSIANS ON ARMS CONTROL IN SPACE, AND SHULTZ, WITH THE INITIATION OF A NEGOTIATING PROCESS IN CENTRAL AMERICA, HAVE MOVED ALREADY TO DRAW THE STING OF THE DEMOCRATIC ATTACK.

8. THE REPUBLICANS HAVE YET TO LAUNCH THEIR COUNTER-OFFENSIVE. IT WILL BE A CONTEST BETWEEN TWO NICE GUYS, BUT BETWEEN ONE WITH CHARISMA AND ONE WITHOUT: BETWEEN ONE WHO IS THE INCUMBENT WITH THE MOOD OF AMERICA STILL ON THE WHOLE WITH HIM AND A CHALLENGER SUMMONING UP THE SPIRIT OF THE PAST: BETWEEN A MASTER OF TELEVISION AND AN APPRENTICE IN THAT ART: BETWEEN A PARTY OF NATURAL MINORITY WITH THE MONEY AND THE TECHNIQUE TO GET OUT ITS VOTE AND A PARTY OF NATIONAL MAJORITY WITH A PROVEN CAPACITY TO POLL UNDER ITS STRENGTH.

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9. TO SUM UP, I SEE NO REASON TO QUARREL WITH THE 'ECONOMIST'S' VERDICT THAT CALCULATIONS FOR A DEMOCRATIC VICTORY TURN ON MISFORTUNE STRIKING REAGAN, NONE ON ENTHUSIASM FOR MONDALE INFECTING THE ELECTORATE AT LARGE. SAN FRANCISCO HAS MADE IT AT LEAST A TWO-HORSE RACE: BUT REAGAN MUST STILL BE FAVOURITE TO WIN IN NOVEMBER.

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