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FM PARIS

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELNO 482

OF 131634Z MAY 87

INFO PRIORITY MOSCOW

INFO ROUTINE BONN, WASHINGTON

mt

CHIRAC'S VISIT TO MOSCOW

SUMMARY

1. CHIRAC'S VISIT CARRIES RISKS, BUT HE HAS TO SHOW DOMESTICALLY THAT HE CAN TALK TO THE RUSSIANS.

DETAIL

2. CHIRAC SETS OFF TOMORROW (14 MAY) ON A 3-DAY VISIT TO THE USSR. AFTER THE EXPULSION OF 6 SOVIET DIPLOMATS IN EARLY APRIL, IT LOOKED AT ONE STAGE AS IF THE VISIT WOULD BE POSTPONED. AS SEEN FROM HERE, THE RUSSIANS PLAYED HARD TO GET OVER THE DATES, AND THEN THE PROGRAMME, AND ARE NOW KEEPING UP A STRONG ANTI-FRENCH PRESS CAMPAIGN. CENTRAL THEMES AS REPORTED HERE ARE THE TOUGH LINE TAKEN BY CHIRAC ON BOTH ARMS CONTROL AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES. THAT CHIRAC HAS NEVERTHELESS PERSEVERED WITH THE VISIT IS PROBABLY DUE TO DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS. TO FURTHER HIS OWN PRESIDENTIAL AMBITIONS AND TO COUNTER MITTERRAND'S MONOPOLY IN THE ROLE OF FRANCE'S WORLD STATESMAN, CHIRAC NEEDS TO SHOW THAT HE TOO CAN DO BUSINESS WITH WORLD LEADERS. HIS VISIT TO WASHINGTON AT THE BEGINNING OF APRIL WAS REASONABLY SUCCESSFUL BUT NEEDED TO BE BALANCED BY A TRIP TO MOSCOW.

3. THE SITUATION DOES HOWEVER CARRY RISKS. THE RUSSIANS APPEAR IN NO MOOD TO OFFER CHIRAC ANY FAVOURS. HIS VISIT WILL INEVITABLY BE COMPARED WITH MRS THATCHER'S. FRENCH OFFICIALS HAVE NEGOTIATED A MEETING WITH GORBACHEV, AN APPEARANCE ON SOVIET TELEVISION, ETC, BUT CHIRAC MAY BE LUCKY TO AVOID UNFAVOURABLE COMMENT. SO FAR PRESS COVERAGE HAS BEEN VERY LOW-KEY - WHICH MAY IN ITSELF REFLECT GOVERNMENT CAUTION OR NERVOUSNESS. AS FOR THE SUBSTANCE, WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO DETECT ANY NEW THEME. CHIRAC WILL HAVE TO BE CAREFUL OVER WHAT HE SAYS ON INFO. BRIEFINGS SO FAR HAVE BEEN IN TERMS OF INFORMING HIMSELF ON SOVIET POLICIES AND EXPLAINING FRENCH VIEWS ON

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1 HUMAN

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HUMAN RIGHTS, NUCLEAR DETERRENCE AND EUROPE. BUT WITH CHIRAC THERE
IS ALWAYS THE RISK OF THE SURPRISE COMMENT.

FRETWELL

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