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PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO PARIS, 29 JULY.

SUMMARY

1. THE PRIME MINISTER, ACCOMPANIED BY A UK DELEGATION, VISITED PARIS FOR THE CHANNEL TUNNEL RATIFICATION CEREMONY. SHE ALSO HELD SEPARATE TETE-A-TETE TALKS WITH MITTERRAND AND CHIRAC.

DETAIL

2. THE PRIME MINISTER VISITED PARIS FOR SIX HOURS ON 29 JULY FOR THE CEREMONY OF RATIFICATION OF THE CHANNEL TUNNEL TREATY. SHE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT, THE HON PAUL CHANNON, THE MINISTER OF STATE AND PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT, MR DAVID MITCHELL AND LORD BRABAZON OF TARA, AND A DELEGATION INCLUDING SENIOR MEMBERS OF EUROTUNNEL, BRITISH RAIL, TRANSMANCHE LINK, KENT COUNTY COUNCIL, LOCAL KENT BOROUGH COUNCILS AND WHITEHALL DEPARTMENTS.

3. THE PRIME MINISTER AND PRESIDENT MITTERRAND EXCHANGED INSTRUMENTS OF RATIFICATION AND WITNESSED THE SIGNING OF THE PROCES-VERBAL RECORDING THE EXCHANGE. AT THE SAME CEREMONY AT THE ELYSEE PALACE THE FRENCH MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND I SIGNED AND EXCHANGED LETTERS RECORDING THE RULES OF ARBITRATION AND MR CHANNON, HIS FRENCH OPPOSITE NUMBER, M. PIERRE MEHAIGNERIE, AND THE CO-CHAIRMEN OF EUROTUNNEL SIGNED THE ARBITRATION PROTOCOL. IN BRIEF SPEECHES MARKING THE EVENT, THE PRIME MINISTER AND PRESIDENT MITTERRAND REFERRED TO THE HISTORIC NATURE OF THE OCCASION AND THE SCALE OF THE PROJECT. THERE WAS PARTICULAR INTEREST IN THEIR ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE JOINT INTENTION TO ESTABLISH HIGH-SPEED TRAIN SERVICES BETWEEN PARIS AND LONDON FROM THE DATE OF THE OPENING OF THE TUNNEL. THE FRENCH DELEGATION ATTENDING THE CEREMONY WAS LED BY THE PRIME MINISTER, M. JACQUES CHIRAC, AND INCLUDED RAIMOND (MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS), MEHAIGNERIE (MINISTER OF EQUIPMENT, HOUSING, REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORT), DOUFFIAGUES (MINISTER OF TRANSPORT), AND A NUMBER OF FORMER MINISTERS, REPRESENTATIVES OF EUROTUNNEL AND SENIOR CIVIL SERVANTS.

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4. THE PRIME MINISTER WAS TOGETHER PRIVATÉLY WITH PRESIDENT MITTERRAND AT THE ELYSEE FOR AN HOUR BEFORE THE CEREMONY. AFTER LUNCH WITH THE TWO DELEGATIONS AT THE ELYSEE, THE PRIME MINISTER WENT ON TO THE MATIGNON FOR AN HOUR AND A HALF'S TALKS WITH CHIRAC WHICH CONCENTRATED ON IRAN/IRAQ AND EUROPEAN COMMUNITY MATTERS. THE TWO PRIME MINISTERS SUBSEQUENTLY HELD A JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE (THE TEXT OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT AND ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS WAS TRANSMITTED IN MY TELNO 751 - NOT TO ALL).

5. IN THE AFTERNOON DOUFFIAGUES AND MR MITCHELL MET AT THE FRENCH MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT TO INAUGURATE THE FIRST FORMAL SESSION OF THE INTER-GOVERNMENTAL COMMISSION FOR THE CHANNEL FIXED LINK, WHICH WILL HENCEFORTH MEET ON A REGULAR BASIS UNDER THE CHAIRMANSHIP OF SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE TWO MINISTRIES OF TRANSPORT.

6. THE FRENCH PRESS THIS MORNING GAVE WIDE COVERAGE TO THE CEREMONY, ABOVE ALL WELCOMING THIS FURTHER EVIDENCE OF BRITISH ATTACHMENT TO EUROPE AND DRAWING SATISFACTION FROM THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF A JOINT COMMITMENT TO A HIGH-SPEED LINK FROM 1993. SOME PAPERS OBSERVE THAT THE UK HAS FOR THE MOMENT RULED OUT A SEPARATE HIGH SPEED TRACK BETWEEN LONDON AND THE COAST, BUT THIS IS NOT GIVEN PROMINENCE. THE PRIME MINISTER IS ALSO CONGRATULATED FOR HER EFFECTIVE PRESENTATION IN FRENCH: THE PROMINENT COVERAGE GIVEN BY FRENCH TV NEWS LAST NIGHT INCLUDED A PASSAGE OF HER SPEECH IN FRENCH.

FERGUSSON

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