

GRS 31φ

UNCLASSIFIED

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TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 231 OF 27 FEBRUARY 198φ

INFO ROUTINE DUBLIN ROME LUXEMBOURG BONN THE HAGUE UKREP BRUSSELS
BRUSSELS AND COPENHAGEN

PRIME MINISTER'S PANORAMA INTERVIEW - FRENCH PRESS REACTION

1. THE PRIME MINISTER'S REMARKS ON THE POSSIBILITY OF WITH-
HOLDING THE BRITISH CONTRIBUTION TO THE EC BUDGET ARE WIDELY
REPORTED IN THE FRENCH MEDIA TODAY. MOST COMMENT IS ADVERSE.
VERY FEW PAPERS QUOTE MRS THATCHER IN CONTEXT, BUT MOST OF THEM
USE HER INTERVIEW AS A PEG ON WHICH TO HANG COMMENTS ABOUT
BRITISH RECALCITRANCE.

2. TYPICAL HEADLINES ARE - QUOTE MRS THATCHER ATTACKS THE NINE
UNQUOTE (FIGARO, RIGHT-WING) SEMI-COLON QUOTE MRS THATCHER OFF TO
WAR AGAIN WITH THE COMMUNITY UNQUOTE (LE MATIN, SOCIALIST)
SEMI-COLON QUOTE MRS THATCHER THREATENS UNQUOTE (LA CROIX,
CATHOLIC) SEMI-COLON QUOTE MRS THATCHER RETURNS TO THE OFFENSIVE
FOR A REDUCTION IN BRITISH PAYMENTS TO THE COMMUNITY UNQUOTE
(LE MONDE, INDEPENDENT, LEFT OF CENTRE). LE MATIN'S LONDON
CORRESPONDENT INTRODUCES HIS ARTICLE BY SAYING QUOTE MARGARET
THATCHER IS TENACIOUS. THAT WE KNEW ALREADY. ALTHOUGH SHE HAS
LITTLE CHANCE OF WINNING HER CASE, SHE MEANS TO BRING UP AGAIN
FOR DISCUSSION AT THE NEXT SUMMIT THE PROBLEM OF THE BRITISH
CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY BUDGET. AND SHE HAS JUST GIVEN NOTICE
OF THIS BY THREATENING TO STOP HER PAYMENTS TO THE COMMUNITY.
UNQUOTE

3. ON EUROPE NUMBER ONE (COMMERCIAL RADIO) JEAN BOISSONNAT,
ONE OF ITS MOST INFLUENTIAL COMMENTATORS, SAID THIS MORNING
THAT THE BRITISH HAD NEVER JOINED THE COMMUNITY WHOLE-HEARTEDLY.
IT WAS TRUE THAT DE GAULLE HAD ADOPTED AN EMPTY CHAIR POLICY,
BUT MRS THATCHER WAS PROPOSING AN EMPTY COFFERS POLICY
WHICH, GIVEN THE COMMUNITY'S CURRENT BUDGETARY PROBLEMS, WAS
FAR MORE SERIOUS. BOISSONNAT THEN WENT ON TO SPECULATE THAT
THE EC MIGHT BE HEADING FOR A FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE. A HARD CORE
OF FULLY-COMMITTED COUNTRIES WAS DEVELOPING, AND AROUND IT
OTHER LESS COMMITTED COUNTRIES WITH LESS AND LESS DUTIES
AND LESS AND LESS RIGHTS. HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE THOUGHT
BRITAIN CAME INTO THE LATTER CATEGORY.

HIBBERT

FCO/WHITEHALL DISTN.

ECD (I)