

Much ado about nothing at the Summit

UNDER THE CLOCK FROM VENICE

by Patrick Weever

ARMS CONTROL: we are all in favour. Let's keep the ball rolling on this one.

TERRORISM: we are against it.

THE GULF WAR: stop it and keep the oil flowing.

That's how one German newsmen summed up yesterday's Summit statement on East-West relations adding despairingly, how on earth do we sell this to my newsdesk?

Other observers were open, querying if Summits are necessary. The British Press was guided that the Gulf situation was not discussed at all at the working dinner for aids of government.

A truly extraordinary suggestion hard to reconcile with

headlines in the American newspapers next day like "Europeans alarmed at tough talk by Reagan aids."

According to a United Press International report, Britain, France, Italy and West German all firmly oppose any pre-emptive strike against Chinese-made airworm missiles if they are deployed by Iran.

Privately, though, the Americans seem confident that if "push comes to shove" in the Gulf their friends will back them up—particularly Mrs Thatcher.

Sorry, we're closed
HAD Mitterrand been tempted to drop in at the Accademia, a gallery of histor-

ic paintings, he would have found a sign reading CLOSED. Scribbled underneath it was "Is Reagan visiting the museum?"

The native Venetians will be pleased when the Summit visitors depart. Their city has been ringed with beretta-toting Carabinieri. Marco Polo airport has been closed and the city's gondoliers have been complaining bitterly about lost tourist takings.

Carabinieri jump ship

LEADERS attending the Summit may be staying in some of the world's most luxurious hotels but 800 policemen brought in to protect them refused to sleep on a ferry boat, calling it "filthy." Recruited from other parts of Italy, they had to be moved to hotels or other ships. They said their billets on the ferry were cramped, dirty and lacked proper sanitary facilities.

President Reagan to the Venice Economic Summit, Rome, the Vatican, W. Berlin and Bonn is something astonishing. Everything any reporter conceivably might want to know is in its hundreds of pages somewhere.

Ciao Mrs Thatcher
IT WILL take the Italians a long time to forgive Mrs Thatcher for what they see as the discourteous brevity of her visit.

Many insist that she deliberately called the Election to gain maximum publicity from her flying visit to the Summit though this is categorically denied by Downing Street.

A SPOT OF FRENCH INDIGESTION

DESPITE his nation's reverence for good food, the Summit working dinner lasted just a bit too long for French President Francois Mitterrand who apparently excused himself early and went for a walk to see the sights of Venice.

"Of course the French President finds the Summits very useful," said a spokeswoman for him who asked not to be identified by name. It's interesting to meet with people that he knows pretty well for years.

"But according to him he doesn't like very much the way a Summit goes on," said a spokesman. According to the French President

such a Summit is too formal. "Mitterrand would prefer something more intimate, not so formal. A little bungalow, talking freely. That is the way he would like the Summit."

Summiters' public relations people were quick to point out that Mitterrand's early departure merely signalled the easy familiarity of the Western leaders, many of whom are good friends.

Perhaps the most celebrated friendship is between Reagan and Mrs Thatcher. But Reagan is also known to be personal friends with West German Chancellor Kohl, and even Japanese PM Yasuhiro Nakasone called him Ron.



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