

# Venice summit collects faint praise

After the president and prime ministers had left and the flags were taken down, most summit watchers gave the three days at Venice a token two cheers — one probably for effort alone.

The seven most powerful nations of the western world had agreed on a number of things, out there were many qualifications.

After a strong initiative by Canada's Brian Mulroney, the leaders at the summit urged South Africa to abandon apartheid, but let host country Italy speak for them rather than incorporate it in their final communique. Britain's Margaret Thatcher was skittish about including South Africa in a formal declaration; West Germany's Helmut Kohl vetoed it outright.

Mulroney was pleased: "This is a signal to Africans listening to radios somewhere not to abandon democratic values for violence," he said. "I'm glad that persistence paid off."

The summit seven also called for greater efforts to fight AIDS, but — mindful of the controversial universal-testing issue — warned that all measures should be taken in accordance with human rights.

Beyond that, they patched together several other compromises: general support to the U.S. on the Gulf war, arms control.

And, just as they had at the 1986 Tokyo summit, they called for a reduction of the U.S. budget deficit and asked countries with trade surpluses, notably Japan and West Germany, to stimulate demand for more foreign goods.

The U.S. dollar has fallen far enough, they agreed, and they hoped for an end to protectionism, for closer coordination of their economies.

The final statement promised a speedier timetable on grain subsidy negotiations. That, too, was strongly promoted by Mulroney who had promised Western farmers — suffering in the global subsidy battle — that he would take their case to Venice. It will probably get more prominence at next year's summit, to be held in Toronto.

A quip by President Ronald Reagan summed things up rather neatly: Asked why the summit declaration had no teeth in it, he pointed out that nobody had planned to bite



REUTERS PHOTO

**Summary:** Prime Minister Brian Mulroney didn't have to wait for diplomatic cables, position papers and office memos to find out what the U.S. and West Germany were discussing. He had a direct line at this Venice summit meal, just listening, with the interpreter between West Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl and U.S. President Ronald Reagan making things easy.

DATE June 14

SUBJECT/SUJET

TORONTO STAR

PUBLICATION

