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FM PARIS 2417φφZ MAY 82

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 541 OF 24 MAY

INFO PRIORITY UKMIS NEW YORK, MODUK.

FALKLANDS : FRENCH ATTITUDE

1. SPEAKING ABOUT THE FALKLANDS IN THE COURSE OF A PRESS CONFERENCE ON 24 MAY IN THE IVORY COAST, PRESIDENT MITTERRAND IS QUOTED BY LE MONDE AS SAYING THAT " BRITAIN IS OUR ALLY, IT IS A COUNTRY WITH WHICH WE HAVE LIVED OVER THE COURSE OF THIS CENTURY THROUGH THE MOST TRAGIC MOMENTS OF OUR EXISTENCE. WE HAVE LIVED THROUGH A PERIOD OF INTENSE SOLIDARITY WITH BRITAIN AND BRITAIN WITH US. ALL THESE LINKS BETWEEN US CANNOT BE AT THE MERCY OF EVENTS, HOWEVER REGRETTABLE, SUCH AS THOSE GOING ON AT THE MOMENT". AFTER DESCRIBING LATIN AMERICAN VIEWS THAT BRITAIN'S BEHAVIOUR WAS COLONIALIST AS "RATHER EXCESSIVE", MITTERRAND WENT ON: "FRANCE HAS VERY STRONG STRONG LINKS WITH LATIN AMERICA WHICH GO BEYOND TRADE LINKS, WHICH DERIVE FROM FACTORS OF CIVILISATION. WE THEREFORE WANT THE FRIENDSHIP OF THESE PEOPLES, WE HAVE IT AND WE DON'T WANT TO LOSE IT". MITTERRAND ADDED THAT THE ARGENTINE INITIATIVE HAD OFFENDED "BRITAIN , OUR FRIEND" IN ITS INTERESTS AND ITS PRIDE. HE OBSERVED THAT FROM THE MOMENT WHEN BRITAIN IT COULD NOT ACCEPT THE FAIT ACCOMPLI IN THE FALKLANDS, ITS FLEETS COULD NOT RETURN HOME WITHOUT FULFILLING ITS MISSION WHICH COULD NOT BE JUST ONE OF INTIMIDATION. MITTERRAND CONCLUDED : "FRANCE WILL ALWAYS BE A FIRM SUPPORTER OF A RETURN TO A JUST PEACE ("PAIX DANS LE RESPECT DU DROIT"). THIS MEANS THAT EVERYTHING THAT MIGHT BE DONE AND SAID TO BRING ABOUT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE END TO THE FIGHTING WHILE RESPECTING THE LAW WILL BE DONE BY FRANCE. HOWEVER WE WILL NOT DO IT OUT OF INDULGENCE TOWARDS ONE PARTY OR THE OTHER, WE WILL DO IT BECAUSE THE RETURN TO A JUST PEACE IS A CONSTANT THEME OF FRENCH DIPLOMACY". IN THIS CONNECTION, MITTERRAND RECALLED FRANCE'S ATTACHMENT TO RESOLUTION 5φ2.

2. SPEAKING IN SIMILAR VEIN AT AIX-EN-PROVENCE ON 23 MAY, THE FRENCH DEFENCE MINISTER SAID " IF WE WANT PEACE THAT MEANS A JUST PEACE ALLOW THE DEFENCE MINISTER TO SAY IN THIS CONTEXT THAT THE AGRASSOR IS ARGENTINA, AND THE VICTIM IS BRITAIN, AND THAT BRITAIN IS DEFENDING ITS RIGHTS".

3. HERNU IS ALSO QUOTED AS SAYING THAT HE HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OF ANY OFFICIAL REQUEST FROM MR NOTT OR THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT CONCERNING THE POSSIBLE LOAN OF FRENCH PLANES TO BRITAIN. HE WAS COMMENTING ON REPORTS STEMMING APPARENTLY FROM A CLAIM

/MARCEL

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MARCEL DASSAULT HAD MADE ON THE RADION THAT BRITAIN HAD ASKED FOR THE LOAN OF SUPER-ETANDARDS AND MIRAGES TO STUDY THEIR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES.

4. FRENCH PRESS COVERAGE OF THE PANDINGS HAS BEEN REASONABLY FAVOURABLE. LE FIGARO AND LE QUOTIDIEN (BOTH RIGHT-WING) HAVE CARRIED STRONGLY SUPPORTIVE EDITORIALS AND EVEN LE MONDE IN ITS EDITORIAL ON 23 MAY ADMITTED THAT WHATEVER ARGENTINA'S RIGHTS MIGHT BE OVER THE FALKLANDS IT HAS BEEN THE AGGRESSOR.
FRETWELL

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