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(56) - MY TELNO 454: FALKLANDS: FRENCH ATTITUDE

1. ALTHOUGH SECTIONS OF THE PRESS CONTINUE TO TAKE AN UNSYMPATHETIC LINE THERE HAS BEEN SOME STEADYING OF FRENCH OPINION IN THE LAST FEW DAYS.
2. CONTACTS IN THE SOCIALIST PARTY HAVE TOLD US THAT THERE IS NO PRESSURE FROM THE GRASS ROOTS TO PERSUADE THE GOVERNMENT TO MODERATE ITS SUPPORT FOR BRITAIN. ABOUT TWO-THIRDS OF THE SOCIALIST PARLIAMENTARY GROUP APPARENTLY BACK THE GOVERNMENT'S LINE. JOSPIN, THE SOCIALIST PARTY SECRETARY, IN A RADIO INTERVIEW ON 9 MAY CRITICISED THE ARGENTINE JUNTA AND ITS METHODS. HOWEVER HE ALSO STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF EUROPE'S LINKS WITH LATIN AMERICA AND THE NEED NOT TO "HUMILIATE" THE LATIN AMERICAN PEOPLE, AND SAID THAT FRANCE SHOULD BE PRESSING FOR A COMPROMISE, ADDING THAT THIS WAS THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY.
3. RECENT SOUNDINGS AMONG OFFICIALS IN BOTH THE QUAI AND THE ELYSEE SUGGEST THAT THEY DO NOT CONSIDER THAT FRENCH PUBLIC OPINION AT THIS STAGE PRESENTS ANY PROBLEM FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S CONTINUED SUPPORT FOR THE UK.
4. TODAY'S (12 MAY) LE FIGARO CARRIES ON ITS FRONT PAGE AN EXCELLENT ARTICLE BY A WRITER USING A NOM-DE-PLUME. HE MENTIONS THE LAST WAR: "LET US BE GRATEFUL TO BRITAIN WHICH REFUSED TO KNUCKLE UNDER IN 1940 - THANKS TO WHICH WE ARE AT LIBERTY TODAY - FOR NOT FORGETTING THAT SHE WAS AND STILL IS A GREAT NATION". THE WRITER ALSO VOICES ANOTHER THEME WHICH IS COMING MORE TO THE FORE AS A REACTION TO THE PACIFIST VOICES WHICH HAVE BEEN RAISED: "IT IS CAPITALLY IMPORTANT THAT BRITAIN TODAY AND PERHAPS FRANCE TOMORROW SHOULD PROVE THEIR DETERMINATION TO USE - IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH THEY ALONE SHOULD DECIDE - THEIR CONVENTIONAL FORCES. OTHERWISE THEIR NUCLEAR ARSENAL WOULD SOON SEEM TO BE IN THE EYES OF WORLD OPINION NO MORE THAN A "PAPER TIGER" AND IT WOULD LOSE ALL CREDIBILITY VIS-A-VIS THE SOVIET UNION".

FRETWELL

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