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INDEX	PA	ACTION: []

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MY TELNO 501: FALKLANDS: CHEYSSON LEAK

1. REACTION OF TODAY'S (15 MAY) FRENCH DAILIES TO THE CHEYSSON LEAK IS AS FOLLOWS:

(A) LE FIGARO (RIGHT-WING) MAKES NO EDITORIAL COMMENT ON THE ARTICLE IN ITS ACCOMPANYING COLOUR MAGAZINE AND CONFINES ITSELF TO REPORTING CHEYSSON'S REPLIES TO JOURNALISTS ON ENTERING THE FCO YESTERDAY.

(B) LE QUOTIDIEN (RIGHT-WING) IN A MAJOR FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE, SETS THIS EPISODE IN THE CONTEXT OF PREVIOUS CHEYSSON "GAFFES". THE AUTHOR OF THE ARTICLE IN LE QUOTIDIEN, WHICH HAS CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTED BRITAIN OVER THE FALKLANDS AND CRITICISED THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT FOR NUANCING ITS SUPPORT, EMPHASISES THE UNFORTUNATE TIMING OF THIS LEAK AND CRITICISES DORIN'S ANALYSIS OF THE

FALKLANDS SITUATION. IT TAKES DORIN, HIS JUDGMENT AND HIS PAST CAREER TO PIECES AND SAYS THAT CHEYSSON'S REAL "GAFFE" IS TO HAVE CHOSEN DORIN AS AS ADVISER.

(C) LE MATIN (SOCIALIST) WHICH HAS ALSO SUPPORTED BRITAIN IN THE CRISIS, SAYS IN AN EDITORIAL THAT IT IS THE CONTENT OF THE NOTE RATHER THAN THE LEAK ITSELF THAT IS WORRYING. IT CONSIDERS THAT THE QUAI'S JUDGEMENT WITH THE BENEFIT OF HINDSIGHT IS UNFAIR, AND THAT IN ANY CASE LONDON'S REACTION HAS NOT BEEN "IMPROVISED" BUT REALLY HANDLED WITH SOME SKILL. IT ASKS RHETORICALLY IF FRANCE AND THE COMMUNITY NOW HAVE THE INTENTION OF MODIFYING THEIR SUPPORT FOR BRITAIN IN THIS ISSUE.

3. CLEAR TRACES OF INTER-FRENCH POLITICS HAVE BEEN NOTED IN THIS EPISODE. IN INTRODUCING THE CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS FIGARO MAGAZINE, A VERY RIGHT-WING JOURNAL, DESCRIBES THEM AS ILLUSTRATING THE "NEW STYLE" OF FRENCH DIPLOMACY, THUS RENEWING PREVIOUS ATTACKS ON CHEYSSON'S CONDUCT OF FRENCH DIPLOMACY. THE DOCUMENT ATTRIBUTED TO CHEYSSON HIMSELF CARRIES AN IMPLICATION THAT CERTAIN ELEMENTS IN THE QUAI D'ORSAY NEED REMINDING OF THE DANGERS OF COMPLACENCY AND ARROGANCE. THE USE OF BRITAIN AS A STICK - OR PERHAPS A SMEAR - WITH WHICH TO ATTACK DOMESTIC OPPONENTS IS NOT WITHOUT PRECEDENT IN FRENCH POLITICS.

PETRIE

FCO
 S AM D
 CABINET OFFICE

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