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BRITISH EMBASSY

PARIS

26 May 1982

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FCO

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Falklands Unit  
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*RAJ 3/6*

*Dear Rob,*

*Mr Saunders*

FALKLANDS CRISIS: ATTITUDE OF THE PCF

1. The attitude of the PCF to the crisis has undergone several changes since 2 April. It might be useful to chronicle the major steps in these changes.
2. The PCF attitude. Comment in the party daily L'Humanité was broadly neutral for the first two weeks. There were factual reports of the despatch of the British Task Force and of Haig's shuttle diplomacy, but no editorial comment and no word from the political leadership of the PCF. Argentina had of course been the object of frequent attacks in the columns of L'Humanité prior to 2 April: and it seemed that the PCF intended to avoid taking sides. When Marchais, Secretary General of the PCF, left Havana on 12 April, for example, the joint communiqué issued in his and Castro's name made no mention of the Falklands issue.
3. We have reason to believe that Laurent, a member of the PCF Secretariat and Politbureau, was briefed on the Soviet line towards the Falklands in Moscow in mid-April. The following week saw a visit by Athos Fava, Secretary General of the Argentine Communist Party to PCF headquarters. For either or both of the above reasons, the line adopted by L'Humanité now became stridently anti-British, with daily reports from a special correspondent in Buenos Aires which gave the Argentine version of events without qualification, and a series of front page editorials by Yves Moreau which denounced Britain's policy and actions in forthright terms.
4. You will have seen from the Embassy's telegrams that this hostility towards Britain in the columns of L'Humanité has continued ever since. It was apparently endorsed at the highest level of the party when Marchais, in an interview with L'Humanité on 10 May, replied to the only question on the Falklands by saying that the PCF supported the double wish of the Argentine people, to rid the Falklands of British domination and to restore democracy in Argentina. Marchais went on to speak of yet one more example of imperialism's hands being "bloodstained" and blamed the crisis on murderous folly on the part of Mrs Thatcher, the use of force by the Argentine junta and manoeuvres by the

/United States.





United States. Two days later, however, Marchais toned down his remarks considerably when appearing live on French radio and said merely that he wished for a ceasefire and UN mediation to solve the crisis. Characteristically he added that if anyone ever attacked a French island, "any such aggressor would be confronted by the communist party". Marchais for the Task Force!

5. So much for the evolving PCF attitude as expressed in L'Humanité. The story became more interesting when Fiterman, the Communist Minister of Transport, said on the radio on 17 May that he thought L'Humanité had gone a bit too far in its various articles on the Falklands crisis. Fiterman went on to describe Marchais' remarks in the L'Humanité interview of 10 May as "very highly nuanced, in every sense of the word" and added, significantly, "you cannot overlook the vital fact that it was Argentina which used an act of force". It was precisely this fact which L'Humanité, the Marchais interview apart, had been ignoring.

6. On 18 May Leroy, director of L'Humanité and a member of the PCF Politbureau, made a statement. He said that he entirely agreed with what Fiterman had said! Leroy explained the situation by saying that he had been away in the provinces when the offending articles were written and that he had spoken to Moreau, the writer concerned, on his return. Given that Moreau and Leroy are known to be close friends and the dates of the editorials would imply an absence of about one month by Leroy, his words have a somewhat hollow ring. Nevertheless, not to be left out, the International Secretary of the PCF, Maxime Gremetz, added his voice on 18 May and claimed that he too fully agreed with Fiterman's criticisms. The position was therefore that three members of the Politbureau were disassociating themselves from the party's apparent official line.

7. What we appear to have been witnessing is a typical PCF dilemma where they have been caught between the official Soviet line on the one hand and on the other, popular feeling in the ranks of the PCF similar to the feeling elsewhere on the Left in France; namely that while it is difficult to support the UK in a "colonial adventure", it is equally difficult to support the Argentine junta with its appalling human rights record. When seeing Berlinguer of the PCI on 24/25 May, Marchais also allegedly expressed his fear that the benefits of France's positive attitude towards Latin America would be lost as a result of her support inside the EEC for the British position. This is an attitude expressed privately by some members of the French Socialist Party.

8. Leroy has been placed in an uncomfortable position by the whole affair and may now suffer further demotion at Marchais' instigation. But the final word ought to be for Fiterman. No doubt he had begun to feel that the position of Communist Minister was becoming increasingly uncomfortable, given the Government's support for Britain. But he must equally have felt very sure of his ground to have spoken out as he did.

*Yours ever,  
Mike*