



EMBASSY TRANSLATION

EXTRACT FROM ARTICLE IN "LA PRENSA", BUENOS AIRES, 18 FEBRUARY 1982

THE MALVINAS : A NECESSITY by J. Iglesias Rouco

It is not easy to know just how far the new government is prepared to go in pursuit of the speedy recovery of the Malvinas, firmly, decisively and without more ado. Here, even the best ideas - above all, the best ideas - are liable to seep away into the sands of doubt, and all too often the moths get at any plan involving imagination and risk. But it is true that for the moment the Foreign Ministry seems set on the right path and is sparing no efforts over this subject.

The least that can be asked of military governments is that they do not dither in the face of any military eventuality when questions of sovereignty are involved. After decades of fruitless negotiations, Argentina has good cause to know that Great Britain will not give up the Malvinas either voluntarily or via any agreement that would mean its losing administrative power in the islands. However inadmissible, British obstinacy on this point is not only understandable but admirable. So the time is approaching for Buenos Aires to think in terms of force, the use of which in such cases is based always on three premises: reason, capacity and necessity.

Capacity

It is not even necessary to speak about the juridical and historical reasons behind the Argentine claims to the Malvinas, since they are so clear and self-evident. The same could almost be said about Argentina's capacity to get them back by military means, bearing in mind their proximity, their almost total lack of defence (barely 80 armed men), and the serious military and diplomatic problems a riposte would present for London, all of them today greater than the value of the territory and, in particular, with no bearing on Britain's foreseeable political future in the West. So all we need to look at is how big is Argentina's need.

New Circumstances

In this context we should bear in mind three relatively new circumstances, which by themselves would justify the fact that Buenos Aires may not have taken a military initiative, say, 20 years ago, but might do so now: (1) the country's isolation in the concertation of Western strategic policy, produced by its erratic foreign policy over the last thirty years, its progressive internal weakness and, more recently, the methods used in the so-called anti-subversive war, which have placed Argentina in a kind of international ghetto; (2) the unfavourable results of the Beagle arbitration, and now of the Papal mediation, which imply an imminent threat to our position in the South Atlantic; (3) Soviet penetration of the area, with consequent American concern, since control of the sea lanes in the area and of the routes to the Antarctic and the Pole itself is likely to become of high strategic importance over the next

Dec New Dept
Defence Dept
Res Dept
Calc Office
Mr. Chas 136 24/2
Mr. Smith
How many more times
to write this same article
24/2 CPT

PA
B



- 2 -

In essence: if Argentina does not obtain a new support base in the South Atlantic forthwith, it runs the risk not only of finding itself excluded from everything that is going on there, but also of suffering from the effects of confrontations between the great powers and their Latin American acolytes, with no benefit at all for itself, and even of having its mainland territory subject to all manner of skullduggery, since in view of its potential riches no-one will be able to distinguish between the mainland and its natural "continuation", that is to say, the general strategic structure of the extreme South. With the loss of the Beagle about to be consummated, with the inevitable modification of the geopolitical spectrum of the region, only the Malvinas and their adjacent islands offer Argentina the possibility of playing the part down there that she ought to, or at least of making up for losses suffered - and thereby of gaining some prospect of relative independence in the 21st century. In comparison with this, krill and hydro-carbon deposits, however significant they may be - though they are less so for a country which has hardly begun to cultivate even its supremely rich soil - are secondary factors or objectives.

Time is pressing

If one bears in mind the speed with which the United States, the USSR and certain Latin American countries, like Brazil and Chile, are today trying to guarantee their positions in the South, it follows that Argentina is no longer in a position to keep putting off the recovery of the islands "sine die". The room left for manoeuvre is already small enough, and is decreasing day by day. Within a year or two, for example, the great - and medium-sized - powers will perhaps have achieved their plans, having come up on us from behind; and if this is the case it will be much more difficult if not impossible to take this step. The same thing would happen to us as it did to those decadent actors of the Commedia Dell'Arte, who always arrived on stage late: instead of charging the public we would have to pay them. For the rest, as far as domestic politics are concerned, the regime would assuredly gain from the psychological and patriotic repercussions of such an undertaking, and this might even be the moving force behind such action. But nobody could reproach them for it. As Goethe said, it's perhaps worth thinking about the "why", but much better about the "how" and the "what". [Remainder of article deals with Soviet penetration in Central America].