

RHS
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1) cc Rec Dept
PUSB
Capt Todd (C. office)
2) Mr. Galtieri
Mr. Cere
18/2

Mr. Smith
Mr. Taylor

BRITISH EMBASSY,
BUENOS AIRES.

12 February, 1981

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South America Department
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
LONDON SW 1

Interesting. No suggestion here
of a possible resolution before
the change of Arg. Govt.

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DESK U.	REGISTRY	
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Dear Sir

THE BEAGLE CHANNEL

The Argentine Army Commander and Army member of the ruling Junta, General Galtieri, had a rather good lunch yesterday with the EC Ambassadors, who foregather for such entertainment of a distinguished guest once a month. On this occasion we quizzed him on the Beagle question and got a few answers of interest.

2. Galtieri's first point was to explain Argentine delays over their response on the grounds that, if a military dictatorship, the Argentine Government was a very peculiar one in that opinions really did have to be respected and coordinated - in obvious contrast with Chile. Secondly, he emphasised that this response was to "the first ideas" which the Pope had put forward in what was specifically a mediation and not an arbitration. Thirdly, we could be quite confident that there was no "vocación para la fuerza" - say, inclination towards force - so what was anyone worrying about?

3. The last Papal mediation, he went on to allege, had been in Seventeen something-or-other and had lasted 85 years. The Beagle question was complex and important and there was no way in which hurry could be justified or achieved.

4. When pressed, Galtieri would not go so far as to say that the renunciation of force in the Montevideo Agreement of 1979 was so fully regarded as continuing binding that, in the case of gross provocation, the Argentines would not respond with force - but that was not the intention. He was insistent that the Pope himself had made clear that his suggestions of last December were "first ideas" and that

/mediation



mediation could and would carry on until ideas acceptable to both parties had been elaborated. The story of the last two years could, indeed, be the first chapter among several chapters, though the matter ahead was more of clarification and elaboration on investigation already achieved.

5. After all, General Galtieri concluded, the question had been unresolved for a long time. It was more important to get a correct solution than a swift one.

6. An interesting minor feature was that, on several occasions, he said "as far as the Army is concerned". He obviously did not feel capable yet of speaking for the Junta as a whole.

you saw

AW

Anthony Williams

cc:

His Excellency
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