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SAVING TELEGRAM

ES/ NO. 10. DOWNING STREET.

BY BAG

FROM ROME

TO FCO

SAVING NO 6

3 FEBRUARY 1983

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AND INFORMATION SAVING TO BRITISH INTERESTS SECTION, BUENOS AIRES

ITALY/ARGENTINA

1. Buenos Aires telno 2 of 31 December 1982.
2. Barbarani, Head of the MFA Latin America political department, has told us that the preparatory visit in December by the 5 members of the Chamber Commission went better than expected. The Argentine reaction was muted. There was now some doubt whether the full delegation would bother to go to Argentina in February/March, as originally intended; public interest in the issue had declined.
3. The desaparecidos issue was debated in Parliament in January, but there was a ritual atmosphere about the proceedings, and attendance was poor. The PSI did not attempt to exploit the subject to embarrass Colombo, who replied in familiar terms to a series of innocuous questions about Italy's policy and contacts with the Argentine Government. Colombo did however commit himself to 3 courses of action:-

/(a) Fioret, the

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(a) Fioret, the DC Under-Secretary (Junior Minister) at the MFA, will visit the capitals of other European countries involved in the desaparecidos problem. His tour will include London (the MFA have promised to give us details as soon as plans are firm).

(b) Colombo will establish within the MFA a special Commission, probably composed of jurists, to monitor the Ministry's work on this issue. Barbarani described this as a cosmetic move which was unlikely to affect the Ministry's work very much.

(c) Colombo said that Italy would refer the desaparecidos problem to the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, and according to Italian press reports this has now been done. In domestic political terms this was a shrewd move, designed to deflect any criticism of Italian inaction. Barbarani did not expect it to have any effect on the Argentine Government, which was used to criticism in international fora.

4. The discovery of new graves, or any serious threat of renewed aggression by Argentina against the Falklands, would probably spark off a fresh debate here about Italian policy, with consequent risks for the cohesion of the Government on this delicate issue. For the time being, however, other foreign policy problems loom larger.

Rm
ARCULUS

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