

TYPISTS

IMMEDIATE

ANCE COPIES: FALKLAND ISLANDS

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FM PARIS 191703Z APR 82

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 367 OF 19 APRIL 1982

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BONN TEL NO 338: FALKLANDS: FRENCH OPINION

1. THERE ARE SEVERAL PARALLELS BETWEEN FRENCH AND GERMAN REACTIONS TO THE FALKLANDS CRISIS. BUT FRENCH ATTITUDES ARE ALSO COLOURED BY FRANCE'S PERCEPTION OF HER OWN INTERESTS AND BY HER EXPERIENCE AS A FORMER COLONIAL POWER.

2. PRESIDENT MITTERRAND HAS GIVEN A FIRM POLITICAL LEAD IN HIS SUPPORT FOR THE BRITISH POSITION. THIS HAS BEEN LARGELY FOLLOWED BY COMMENTATORS IN THE MEDIA. EVEN BEFORE THE INVASION, THE ARGENTINE JUNTA WAS UNPOPULAR WITH THE FRENCH LEFT: WHEN IN OPPOSITION MITTERRAND PUBLICLY CRITICISED THE HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD OF THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT. THIS HAS UNDOUBTEDLY HELPED TO ATTRACT FRENCH SYMPATHY FOR THE BRITISH POSITION. THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT IS ALSO WELL AWARE THAT IF THE ARGENTINIANS ARE ALLOWED TO GET AWAY WITH THE ARMED SEIZURE OF THE FALKLANDS THIS COULD SET A DANGEROUS PRECEDENT FOR THE SECURITY OF FRANCE'S OWN OVERSEAS POSSESSIONS. THIS CONSIDERATION CARRIES PARTICULAR WEIGHT ON THE

POSSESSIONS. THIS CONSIDERATION CARRIES PARTICULAR WEIGHT ON THE FRENCH RIGHT. THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT FINDS IT ALL THE EASIER TO SUPPORT THE BRITISH POSITION IN THAT BY DOING SO IT IS UPHOLDING THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL LAW AND A MANDATORY SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION.

3. FOR ALL THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF BRITISH GOVERNMENT POLICY, MANY INFORMED FRENCHMEN REMAIN BEWILDERED THAT BRITAIN IS PREPARED TO RUN THE RISK OF ARMED CONFLICT WITH ARGENTINA SIMPLY IN ORDER TO UPHOLD THE PRINCIPLE OF SELF-DETERMINATION. THERE IS A COMMON ASSUMPTION THAT THERE MUST BE IMPORTANT ECONOMIC INTERESTS AT STAKE. FRANCE ATTACHES IMPORTANCE TO FISHING AND TO THE POTENTIAL FOR MINERAL EXPLOITATION AROUND SOME OF HER OWN OVERSEAS ISLAND POSSESSIONS. TO THE EXTENT THAT BRITAIN'S POSITION IS NOT MOTIVATED BY HARD ECONOMIC SELF-INTEREST, FRENCHMEN TEND TO BE SCEPTICAL WHETHER THE ENDS JUSTIFY THE MEANS. THE FRENCH WELL UNDERSTAND BRITAIN'S NEED TO DEMONSTRATE HER RESOLVE BUT LIKE THE GERMANS THEY HOPE THAT A DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION CAN BE FOUND. THEY BELIEVE THAT TIME IS NOW SHORT AND WONDER WHETHER HAIG IS THE RIGHT MAN TO WORK OUT A COMPROMISE, OR WHETHER SOME ALTERNATIVE - PERHAPS THE BRAZILIANS - MIGHT DO BETTER.

4. SO FAR THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE TRADE EMBARGO FOR FRENCH INDUSTRY HAVE NOT BEEN PLAYED UP EITHER BY FRENCH OFFICIALS, BY THE BUSINESS AND BANKING COMMUNITY, OR IN THE PRESS. THE OVER-RIDING IMPORTANCE FOR FRANCE OF THE BROADER POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS DESCRIBED ABOVE, AND THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT'S HOPE THAT THE CRISIS WILL BE SWIFTLY RESOLVED, NO DOUBT LARGELY EXPLAIN THIS RELATIVE RESTRAINT. FRENCH OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD US THAT AT PRESENT NO MAJOR FRENCH PROJECTS IN ARGENTINA ARE AT STAKE. IN 1981 FRENCH EXPORTS TO ARGENTINA AMOUNTED TO F1.4 BILLION (0.3% OF TOTAL FRENCH EXPORTS) AND CONSISTED MAINLY OF CAPITAL GOODS AND MOTOR VEHICLES. FRENCH IMPORTS AMOUNTED TO F0.7 BILLION GIVING FRANCE A BILATERAL TRADE SURPLUS OF F0.7 BILLION. IF THE CRISIS IS PROLONGED THE POSSIBLE LONGER TERM CONSEQUENCES FOR FRENCH EXPORTS TO ARGENTINA, AND TO SOUTH AMERICA IN GENERAL, AND THE VOLUME OF OFFICIALLY GUARANTEED EXPORT CREDIT AT RISK (F1.5 BILLION), MAY BEGIN TO LOOM LARGER IN FRENCH THINKING. A CRUCIAL FACTOR WILL BE THE ATTITUDE OF OTHER EC MEMBER STATES, SINCE THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT WILL STILL BE CONCERNED NOT TO GET AHEAD OF THE THE PACK.

5. NEITHER THE FRENCH MINISTERS NOR OFFICIALS HAVE SOUGHT TO ESTABLISH A DIRECT LINK BETWEEN THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE UK AND CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS ON MAJOR COMMUNITY ISSUES. FRENCH MEDIA

NEGOTIATIONS ON MAJOR COMMUNITY ISSUES. FRENCH MEDIA COMMENTATORS HAVE BEEN LESS RETICENT. A VIEW INCREASINGLY EXPRESSED IS THAT COMMUNITY SOLIDARITY MANIFESTED IN RELATION TO THE FALKLANDS SHOULD HAVE A BENEFICIAL EFFECT ON THE HANDLING OF OTHER PROBLEMS, OR MORE BLUNTLY THAT BRITAIN OWES IT TO HER COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO SHOW GREATER FLEXIBILITY ON THESE ISSUES IN RETURN FOR THEIR SUPPORT OVER THE FALKLANDS.

6. IN THE PRESENT SITUATION THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT IS HAVING NO PARTICULAR DIFFICULTY IN MAINTAINING ITS CLEAR-CUT SUPPORT FOR THE BRITISH POSITION AND DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE SUBJECT TO SUCH STRONG CONFLICTING PRESSURES AS SOME OTHER EC GOVERNMENTS. IF HOWEVER ARMED CONFLICT AROSE, DOUBTS WOULD RAPIDLY GROW. TO KEEP THE FRENCH ON BOARD WE WOULD NEED AT THAT POINT TO BE ABLE TO SHOW, AT THE MINIMUM, THAT WE HAD MADE A SERIOUS EFFORT TO SECURE A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT AND HAD BEEN FLEXIBLE OVER THE LONG TERM STATUS OF THE ISLANDS. IF A CONFLICT THREATENED TO SPREAD OR TO BRING ABOUT A GENERAL DETERIORATION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN EUROPE AND LATIN AMERICA OR A LARGE PART OF THE NON ALIGNED NATIONS, THERE WOULD BE INFLUENTIAL VOICES TO ARGUE HERE AS ELSEWHERE THAT IT WAS TIME TO CALL A HALT.

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