

Mr Duggan
SAmD

Mr Davies Mr Bright
for
file
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ARGENTINA/FALKLAND ISLANDS

1. At lunch today the Argentine Ambassador referred to the forthcoming clandestine meeting between the Minister of State and the Argentine Deputy Foreign Minister. He was under the impression that the venue had been firmly fixed for Venice. He said that, on the Argentine side, knowledge of the planned meeting had been restricted to only five people in the Ministry, viz: the Foreign Minister, Commodore Cavandoli, the Secretary General, Commandante Bloomer-Reeve and himself. Cavandoli had rung him in some excitement from Buenos Aires after Mr Cecil Parkinson had referred in a press conference to a forthcoming meeting between Mr Ridley and himself. Sr Ortiz de Rozas had calmed him down, assuring him that we on our side were being as careful as the Argentines were to ensure confidentiality. I confirmed that Mr Parkinson was not party to plans for the meeting and must have been speaking off the cuff, on the assumption that the usual round of meetings would be held in the autumn.

2. I told Sr Ortiz de Rozas that we had proposed a change of venue to Commodore Cavandoli last week on security grounds, as a result of advice received from our experts that a meeting in Italy would be unsafe. He said that he entirely agreed. He thought that Geneva would be a satisfactory alternative. Commodore Cavandoli himself has suggested Geneva as a jumping off point for the proposed meeting, since he could easily find a reason for being in Geneva on UN business (eg human rights). I gathered that, had Venice been agreed upon, Commodore Cavandoli would have expected to go there directly from Geneva and not via Rome, as we had supposed. We cannot, of course, be sure that Sr Ortiz de Rozas really knows what he is talking about in this context. He did not venture any suggestions for other possible sites for the meeting; and I was relieved that he did not return to his previous idea that the UK might be suitable.

3. When I pointed out the importance of agreeing a cover story for the meeting, Sr Ortiz de Rozas agreed and said that the best solution might be to place the emphasis on the expected meeting in New York between the Secretary of State and the Argentine Foreign Minister (see separate minute). I mentioned to the Ambassador that the Falkland Islands Office had already been on to the Department seeking confirmation that the usual autumn round of talks would be held with the Argentine, presumably in Geneva and that the Department had played a very straight bat in return. I said that, whatever cover story we eventually decided upon for the meeting, it was obviously vitally important that there should be the closest consultation between us about its formulation. Sr Ortiz de Rozas entirely agreed.

G W Harding

26 August 1980
cc PS/Mr Ridley