

THE AM PROGRAMME
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PRESENTER:

Well, the Foreign Office, again as we heard in the news, is still waiting for Argentina to explain why forty of its citizens landed illegally on a Falkland Islands' dependency. Lord Carrington wants an inquiry; but MPs are calling for stronger action. Conservative Sir John Biggs-Davison says the government

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should fire off a formal complaint.

SIR JOHN BIGGS-DAVISON:

If this is allowed to go unchecked, without protest, then it will be the beginning of something else. We know that Argentina has this claim - this false claim - to the sovereignty of the British Falkland Islands; which include as which include as dependencies of the Falkland Islands these Antarctic territories. These territories may, in the future, be of importance for the resources which, of course, are not yet fully known; and if we just let this go by without protest, without diplomatic action, then we can expect further invasions of British sovereignty in that part of the world.

PRESENTER:

Why should, to most people at home it would seem strange that we still do retain this interest in the Falkland Islands, or indeed, as you say, they are part of our territories, but it is really closer to Argentina than it is to us, isn't it?

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SIR JOHN BIGGS-DAVISON:

I find people very keen on supporting the Falkland Islanders; knowing that they are almost a hundred per cent British, as British as they are, and they, people understand this; and they see no reason why a territory which is entirely peopled by British people should not be allowed to remain under the British Crown.

PRESENTER:

Is that the fact? That the Falklanders themselves have, one, nothing to do with Argentina and everything to do with this country?

SIR JOHN BIGGS-DAVISON:

Well, no; they want to have a lot to do with Argentina; they want to co-operate with Arg, with their neighbours in Argentina. This is perfectly right, they should be able to; and I wish that the development of the, of the oil in those waters, er, and any other economic activity ... could be co-ordinated with, er, Argentina; this would be very sensible.

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PRESENTER:

This is part of the key to the, er, interest which Argentina is showing in the whole issue, of course, that there is a certain amount of wealth in the area, isn't there?

SIR JOHN BIGGS-DAVISON:

Yes, I think that that is true. It's partly that; and it's partly that the dictatorship in that country; if they want to, er, divert attention from domestic problems, they can always, er, speak about the Malveens (phonetic), the Falkland Islands, er, rather as the Spaniards, from time to time, have talked about Gibraltar.

PRESENTER:

Are we in any position to do, militarily defend these Islands, if it comes to it?

SIR JOHN BIGGS-DAVISON:

Well, we have a very small garrison there; we have a Royal Marine detachment; but we don't want to think in terms of conflict. We want to think, however, in terms of strenuous diplomatic activity; we want to,

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er, bring our allies onto our side, so far as we can; and I have often thought that if, as is necessary, we bring about a Southern hemisphere defence organization, because er, the martime defence of the Southern hemisphere is very, very important, the Falkland Islands would be a very suitable base for headquarters in the scheme of things.

PRESENTER:

What, exactly, would you like the British Government to do then? Just a strong formal protest is that enough?

SIR JOHN BIGGS-DAVISON:

I think this is where we, where it starts, because we don't want any repetitions and we don't want any misunderstandings. There are various options open to a government; there is the Security Council of the United Nations, this is a clear case of aggression. Well, they have withdrawn from their aggressions, whether that's to the good. But if there's any repetition of this aggression there is no reason why it should not be

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treated as seriously as any other.

PRESENTER:

And taken to the United Nations?

SIR JOHN BIGGS-DAVISON:

Possibly, but that is a matter for those who have to play the diplomatic hand.

PRESENTER:

Sir John Biggs-Davison, talking to Peter Allen, our Political Editor.

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