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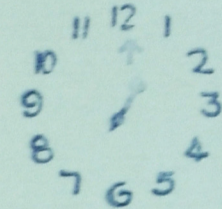


BRITISH EMBASSY,
PARIS.

9 June 1982
11 JUN 1982

J L Bullard Esq CMG
DUSS
FCO

1. ✓ PS / PUS
Mr Gifford
Mr Mahony
Mr G. Moore
WED
Defence Dept



2. Mr Fearne, Emergency Unit

My dear Julian,

This analysis is borne out by reading between the lines of recent statements by Mitterrand.

MS 11/6

FALKLANDS: FUTURE FRENCH POLICY

1. You will have picked up a good impression of French thinking about the Falklands at Versailles, but you may find it useful to know how it looks to us here.
2. There are two main strands in French policy:
 - a) acceptance that the Argentine aggression had to be resisted (in the interests of others as well as the UK) and that the UK could not submit to a fait accompli. There was a belief that the Alliance would be undermined if Britain's allies did not support her. Mitterrand saw this from the start and has been consistent in endorsing action designed to secure the termination of Argentine occupation of the islands, leading to a negotiated settlement.
 - b) Concern for the future of French relations with Argentina and with Latin America as a whole, sometimes expressed in terms of the general western interest in good relations with Latin America. Direct commercial pressures, including especially those of the arms manufacturers and salesmen, are relevant here. So is the French ambition to play a role in North/South questions. Alarm is expressed, whether real or feigned, about the threat to US interests in Latin America and the advantage which the Soviet Union could reap there. There is the feeling in parts of the Socialist party and elsewhere that Britain is engaged on a "colonialist" venture. These concerns are seen to point towards the desirability of saving Argentine face, avoiding casualties, making concessions about the future of the islands so as to facilitate an honourable Argentine withdrawal, all summarised in the code-word "magnanimity".

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INDEX	PA	Action Taken



3. So far strand (a) has prevailed whenever it really mattered; and I think it will continue to do so until the recapture of Port Stanley, provided that this is not a long drawn out affair with heavy casualties and with mounting pressure in the UN for a ceasefire. But the line will change sharply as soon as Port Stanley is retaken; and the second strand of French policy will then become the dominant one.

4. There is one subsidiary aspect to this. There will be a school of thought here which will want to call a halt to military action after the recapture of Port Stanley, without waiting for the elimination of Argentine garrisons on West Falkland. There will be a disposition to argue that the Argentine forces should not be further humiliated after a defeat at Port Stanley; and some will say that to leave the Argentines in possession of West Falkland is a useful step towards a balanced negotiated solution. We can of course argue vigorously that it is essential to liberate the inhabitants of West Falkland, particularly after what we found at Goose Green and may yet find in Port Stanley. We may also be able to make a case that to leave the Argentine forces on West Falkland would virtually guarantee the continuation of military conflict: a ceasefire will be far more effective and reliable if there is 400 miles of water between the respective armed forces. There may also be military arguments relating to the need to protect ourselves against Argentine aircraft approaching in the radar shadow of West Falkland. (It could be useful to give the French whatever evidence we can of Argentine intentions to continue hostilities after the fall of Port Stanley.) I would expect these points to make some impact on the French, but as far as military considerations allow, it would be greatly preferable if operations in West Falkland could be concluded rapidly. If they were prolonged, the voices of those who want to dissociate France from British policy and to move on to the next phase - that of restoring good relations with Latin America - would grow steadily louder. I would not be wholly confident of retaining Mitterrand's support for long in that situation.

5. The main question is how French policy will evolve after the conclusion of military action on the islands. I think we must then expect to see the French emphasising even more clearly than in the past that they have an open mind on the question of sovereignty or even implying support for Argentina's claim. They will be attracted by ideas of shared sovereignty, an interim administration bringing in a United Nations element, etc. I do not know what the Americans have been putting to us on these questions. The French press has been led to believe by both American and French sources that the two governments have worked together on such ideas. The impression created before and during Versailles was that the French, Americans and others were combining to put pressure on the British Government to make an offer on the administration of the islands and on future

/negotiations



negotiations about sovereignty in such a form as to enable the Argentines to withdraw honourably before a battle at Port Stanley. This theme has been less pronounced since Versailles, but I have no doubt that the French will hope to work with the Americans and others to create some such scenario once the fighting is over. They will encourage the Americans in any ideas which Washington is formulating along these lines. They may however hesitate to get very far out in front.

6. With the cessation of large-scale hostilities in the islands (and bearing in mind the caveat in para 4 above) the French will look for very early termination of sanctions against Argentina and for the resumption of arms sales to other Latin American countries even where there is reason to suppose that they are acting on Argentine behalf. If the Argentines declare that they are going to continue the war and in particular to keep up air attacks on British ships, or on British military installations on the islands, I would expect the French to be inhibited from resuming supplies to the Argentine itself. But provided the Argentines do not make too much of a nuisance of themselves in the air, French minds will turn towards fence-mending, possibly including eg a cooperative effort to help avert bankruptcy and to repair the damage done by sanctions to the Argentine economy, though the French will not want to foot much of the bill in present circumstances. France's main concern will be to ensure that her trade relations with the rest of Latin America make up any lost ground as fast as possible. Pressure on the UK to come to a "reasonable" solution on the future of the islands as a means of achieving a permanent ceasefire and a general settlement of differences with the Argentine will tend to grow. Here again the French will hope to act in close agreement, in collusion even, with the United States.

7. In short, the diplomatic hand is going to become more difficult to play, here as elsewhere, after the conclusion of fighting on the islands. A lot of Frenchmen will admire our military achievement and in the longer term our determination and skill in defending a major national interest will undoubtedly register and perhaps help to correct the facile view of an obsolescent Britain. But in the immediate future the majority, including many in the French government, will consider that they can begin to look after French interests without further inhibition and in particular without much concern for the sort of outcome the UK may want to achieve for the long term future of the islands. They are in a rather self-righteous mood over the support they have given us and will tend to see any UK reproaches as ingratitude.

John Fretwell

John Fretwell

cc: HM Ambassadors Washington
Bonn
UKMis New York