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I wonder what CIA
psychiatrists say about
the Pine Bluff?!

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GENERAL GALTIERI

1. CIA psychiatrists have produced an interesting character assessment of General Galtieri which you may wish to read.
2. A precis is attached.

29th April 1982

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DCDS(I)

GENERAL GALTIERI

"1. Galtieri owes his success to bold and decisive moves at times when others have vacillated. He is said by close acquaintances to detest compromise (equating it with weakness). It is said that, when successfully putting down insurgency, he used due legal process; it is also said that he is helping to establish what happened to some of the 'disappeared'. This, and his efforts at the liberalisation process, betoken at least concern that his image should be of a reasonable man.

2. His actions over the Beagle Channel dispute (another long-standing territorial dispute, of course) are thought to be a paradigm for the present crisis as far as both his decision-making and political aspects are concerned. The Vatican solution to the Beagle dispute was rejected by Galtieri, who then seized on the by no means unusual event of 2 Argentine soldiers wandering across the border and being arrested in Chile to close the Argentine/Chile border. He did this without consulting the then President Viola or the other 2 Junta members (challenged on this, Viola is said to have replied that Galtieri was feeling his oats, and that this was his style, as a Caudillo). This position was very difficult to back down from, but Galtieri allowed the border issue to relax gradually over some months, without being seen to have capitulated. Indeed, he gained by his bold move to close the border, and was better placed by it later to unseat Viola. Another analogous point is that over the Beagle issue Galtieri pulled together a fragmentary population against a common enemy.

3. CIA psychiatrists stress that this does not mean that Galtieri is impulsive. On the contrary he is politically calculating and judicious, but his boldness of decision and action has consistently been rewarded.

4. Rallying the people worked again in the Falklands crisis, and the initial demonstrations having exceeded anything Peron turned out, Galtieri must have felt particularly encouraged. He may now see expressions of dissension simply as disloyalty.

5. Though he has advisers (from the Military) he prides himself at being unsullied by any influence, especially compared to other politicians, and is a solitary decision-maker whose judgement has worked well for him. He sees governing Argentina as a matter of winning a series of battles: though the tasks are nasty they have to be performed.

6. Now, of course, his career is entirely staked on the Falklands. Asked whether in a badly deteriorating situation for Argentina he could step aside in the service of his country, CIA psychiatrists said he is probably incapable of separating his own interests from those of Argentina, especially as backing down was, for him, weakness. This said, if his view of the sovereignty principle could be preserved or left unchallenged, and if a face-saving way could be found for him to back down and address the issue again later, then a tactical move to back down is something of which he would be capable, provided also that it was not seen in Argentina in any way as capitulation. Thus, if ways of preserving vestiges of Argentine national honour could be devised, then they might provide a ladder down which Galtieri could climb. In discussion, of course, it was readily accepted that this would prejudice the sovereignty issue, which HMG were not about to do.

7. Finally, Galtieri's boldness could well, especially as he is backed into a corner, lead him to commit Argentine forces very riskily".