



P R Fearn Esq
Emergency Unit
FCO

ALQ 050/594/1

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INDEX	FILE	ACTION TAKEN

BRITISH EMBASSY
THE HAGUE

4 May 1982

Copies to: Emergency Unit
SAND
WED

Dear Fearn,

ARGENTINA AND THE FALKLANDS: DUTCH OPINION

1. It may be helpful for you to have a brief report about Dutch opinion over the Falkland Islands crisis.
2. I should begin by recording that since the start of the crisis the Argentine Embassy has lain very low. The Ambassador has not been seen on recent public occasions eg National Day receptions. Other members of the Embassy who were formerly active in the Club de Jeudi (the junior diplomatic club in The Hague) have also not been in evidence at recent meetings. Nor have there been many signs of attempts by the Embassy to influence parliamentary or public opinion or the media.
3. As regards the attitude of the Dutch Government there is little to add to what we have already reported. They continue to express general understanding of and support for our position (but see para 6 below). The Ambassador will be seeing van der Stoel on 6 May* and we will report again thereafter. In private our contacts have on numerous occasions made it clear to us where their personal sympathies lie - even when they are in positions where a discreet silence might have been regarded as prudent! Those concerned have ranged from members of the Court, to Directors and other senior officials at the MFA and other Government Departments to Members of Parliament and officers in the Netherlands armed services.
4. Until now press and television comment has been strikingly united in hostility to Argentina. This has applied even to the left wing press, which is not normally particularly well disposed to the United Kingdom. For example the Volkskrant of 3 May carried a helpful piece pointing out that the bombing raid on Port Stanley did not necessarily have to be seen as a curtain-raiser for a full-scale war. It should be regarded as a form of armed diplomacy putting the Argentine Government under further pressure. It pointed out that the Argentinians were the aggressors in the first place and a future peaceful solution must not result in the UK feeling that the Argentinians had been rewarded for their aggression. Similar sentiments have been expressed by the conservative press eg De Telegraaf. Commentators have pointed out that it is almost unique for the Dutch press to be united in this way.

* to be confirmed



5. I should however stress that the support we have been getting is as much a factor of dislike of Argentina, particularly given its lamentable human rights record, as sympathy for the UK. You will know the importance attached in this country to the observance of human rights. In this connection, we have continued to hear the comment that it required the crisis over the Falkland Islands to alert the UK to the true nature of the Argentine regime whereas the Dutch had been making clear their disapproval for some considerable time.

6. It is also true that public opinion in this country could change quite rapidly. Developments which could lead to a swing against us would be incidents involving heavy casualties, eg the sinking of the Belgrano. It is worth pointing out in this connection that even the helpful Volkskrant article referred to above ends by stressing that the "UK should now give new diplomatic initiatives a chance..... The Falkland Islands are not worth a war".

7. The point came out at a showing in the Embassy of two TV video recordings about the Falklands this morning, in the course of which the Ambassador also gave a short briefing. Representatives of ANP (English language news Agency), the NRC (the local equivalent of the Times) and VARA (left-wing TV network) all expressed concern about the loss of life. The Ambassador took particular pains to explain the circumstances, but it was clear that there were still some misgivings - not only about the casualties but also about the risk of support for the UK ebbing away. We were thus glad to hear this afternoon that at least another 400 and probably more may have been saved (we have drawn the point to the attention of those concerned and repeated yet again that the Government's aim remains a diplomatic solution and its determination to continue to use the minimum force necessary).

8. The strike which we understand is taking place in the Film Section of the COI at the present time is most unfortunate, as the Ambassador has stressed to Nicholas Gordon-Lennox. We could place considerable footage of film here if only the COI could get it to us. We very much hope that it will be possible for the strike to be resolved in the very near future; no doubt you do too!

cc: Chanceries EC Posts

How was
Roger Hervey
 R B R Hervey