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FM MADRID 051625Z MAY 82

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 249 OF 5 MAY

INFO GOVERNOR GIBRALTAR (PERSONAL)

ENCL No.
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FALKLANDS: BBC SPANISH SERVICE

1. THE GOVERNOR HAS ALREADY REPORTED THE STRONGLY HELD VIEW OF THE CHIEF MINISTER OF GIBRALTAR THAT THE BBC SPANISH SERVICE SHOULD BE REINSTATED BECAUSE OF THE PRESENT SITUATION IN THE FALKLAND ISLANDS (GIBRALTAR TELNO 59 PERSONAL). I HAVE ALSO SEEN A COPY OF HASSAN'S LETTER OF 23 APRIL ON THIS SUBJECT.

2. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT REPORTING ON THE FALKLANDS CRISIS, PARTICULARLY ON SPANISH TELEVISION AND TO A SLIGHTLY LESSER EXTENT ON THE RADIO, IS BIASED IN FAVOUR OF ARGENTINA. IT HAS BECOME MARKEDLY MORE SO SINCE HOSTILITIES BEGAN IN EARNEST. ON THE WHOLE, REPORTING IN THE LOCAL PRESS HAS BEEN RATHER MORE BALANCED: BRITISH COMMUNIQUES AND ATTITUDES IN THE UK HAVE BEEN REPORTED FAITHFULLY ALONGSIDE SIMILAR ONES FROM ARGENTINA BUT GREATER PROMINENCE HAS BEEN GIVEN TO THE ARGENTINE CASE BOTH IN THE HEADLINES AND IN EDITORIAL COMMENT.

3. AT THE ANNUAL COMMERCIAL CONFERENCE TODAY, AT WHICH WERE PRESENT NOT ONLY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EMBASSY AND OTHER POSTS IN SPAIN BUT ALSO MEMBERS OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, THERE WAS A WIDESPREAD FEELING, EXPRESSED PARTICULARLY BY THE LATTER, THAT THE BRITISH CASE WAS NOT GETTING THROUGH TO THE AVERAGE SPANIARD. THIS EMBASSY IS, OF COURSE, ENDEAVOURING TO KEEP OPINION FORMERS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS INFORMED OF BRITISH VIEWS. I HAVE PUT OUR CASE STRONGLY ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS TO THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND HIS OFFICIALS AND AM IN CONSTANT TOUCH WITH THEM. BUT THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT THE SPANISH SERVICE OF THE BBC WOULD HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GET ACROSS OUR MESSAGE TO A MUCH WIDER SPECTRUM OF PUBLIC OPINION.

4. I THEREFORE HOPE IT MIGHT BE FEASIBLE TO OFFER AT LEAST A MINIMAL SERVICE COVERING THE FALKLANDS CRISIS IN SPANISH TO SPANISH LISTENERS. I CAN SEE THAT THERE COULD WELL BE TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES ABOUT MOUNTING AN OPERATION OF THIS KIND WHICH WOULD NEED TO BE ACTIVATED VIRTUALLY IMMEDIATELY IF IT WAS TO HAVE ANY IMPACT. EQUALLY, GIVEN THE UNIQUENESS OF THE SPANISH POSITION, WITH PUBLIC OPINION EMOTIONALLY COMMITTED TO ARGENTINA

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AND A WEAK GOVERNMENT LIABLE TO BE SWAYED BY IT INTO ADOPTING POSITIONS WHICH COULD BE UNHELPFUL OR EVEN DAMAGING FOR WESTERN INTERESTS E.G. OVER GIBRALTAR, IT WOULD CERTAINLY SEEM WORTH CONSIDERATION. WE COULD OF COURSE ENSURE THAT FREQUENCIES FOR ANY SUCH BROADCASTS WERE WIDELY KNOWN WITHIN SPAIN.

PARSONS

ION

S A H D
CABINET OFFICE

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