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cc: Sanctions

[TO BRUSSELS]

YOUR TELNO 96: FALKLANDS - RENEWAL OF SANCTIONS

1. AS YOU WILL HAVE SEEN FROM MY TELEGRAM NO 158 AND FROM PRESS REPORTS, MR TINDEMANS HIMSELF IS ROBUSTLY SUPPORTING THE BRITISH POSITION BOTH PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY. IN AN INTERVIEW ON 4 MAY WITH THE BBC HE AGAIN EXPRESSED UNAMBIGUOUS BACKING FOR THE BRITISH POSITION DESPITE A GOVERNMENT STATEMENT EARLIER IN THE DAY (MY TELNO 161) EXPRESSING CONCERN AT THE MILITARY ESCALATION AND SAYING A PEACEFUL SOLUTION WAS MORE URGENT THAN EVER, (THIS WAS TO SOME EXTENT A REFLECTION OF THE MEETING OF POLITICAL DIRECTORS THAT AFTERNOON).
2. THIS POSITIVE ATTITUDE IS ATTRIBUTABLE PARTLY TO TINDEMANS' PRO-BRITISH INCLINATIONS BUT ALSO TO BELGIAN INTEREST IN PROMOTING COMMUNITY UNITY, ENHANCED BY THE BELGIAN PRESIDENCY AND TINDEMANS' ROLE IN IT. IT REFLECTS THE BELIEF THAT A LACK OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR US OVER THE FALKLANDS COULD HAVE PREJUDICIAL EFFECTS ON FUTURE EUROPEAN COOPERATION IN BOTH THE ECONOMIC AND THE POLITICAL FIELDS. TINDEMANS SEEMS LIKELY THEREFORE TO WORK HARD FOR COMMUNITY AGREEMENT TO RENEW SANCTIONS, ESPECIALLY SINCE SANCTIONS DO NOT AFFECT THE BELGIANS SEVERELY (BRUSSELS TEL 152).
3. KING BAUDOUIN EVIDENTLY SHARES MR TINDEMANS' ATTITUDES (MY TELNO 158). SO PROBABLY DID BELGIAN PUBLIC OPINION AS A WHOLE AT THE START, THOUGH IT IS NOW MORE DELICATELY BALANCED. INITIALLY THERE WAS LITTLE HOSTILE MEDIA COMMENT, AND OUR HANDLING OF THE ISSUE WAS REGARDED SYMPATHETICALLY, BUT EMOTIONS ARE BEGINNING TO TAKE OVER. THE ATTACK ON THE BELGRANO IS ONLY PARTIALLY UNDERSTOOD BY THE BELGIAN PRESS, AND THERE HAVE BEEN ACCUSATIONS OF BRITISH INFLEXIBILITY TOWARDS NEGOTIATION AND INVOLVEMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS.  
AND ALTHOUGH PARLIAMENTARIANS HAVE NOT DEBATED THE ISSUE AND OUR CONTACTS SUGGEST THAT THE MAJORITY OF GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS WOULD REMAIN IN FAVOUR OF OUR APPROACH, THE OPPOSITION COULD CHALLENGE BELGIAN SUPPORT FOR RENEWAL OF COMMUNITY SANCTIONS. THE LOSS OF HMS SHEFFIELD IS LIKELY TO REINFORCE CONCERN ABOUT ESCALATION.

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4. TINDEMANS WILL HAVE TO TAKE THESE POINTS INTO CONSIDERATION AT VILLERS LE TEMPLE. HIS WILLINGNESS AND ABILITY TO HELP US OVERCOME PROBLEMS ON SANCTIONS THERE COULD ALSO BE DIMINISHED IF HIS EC COLLEAGUES THOUGHT US LIKELY TO BE TOTALLY INTRANSIGENT OVER BUDGET ETC. THE MORE WE ARE ABLE TO GET A REAL NEGOTIATION GOING OVER THE BUDGET NEXT WEEKEND, THEREFORE, THE BETTER IT IS LIKELY TO BE FOR THE PROSPECTS OF CONTINUED COMMUNITY UNITY ON THE FALKLANDS, DESPITE M. THORN'S DISCLAIMER (PARIS TELNO 417).

5. YOU MIGHT, IN ANY CASE, THINK IT PRUDENT TO SEEK A BILATERAL MEETING WITH MR TINDEMANS BEFORE THE FULL MEETING OF THE FOREIGN MINISTERS BEGINS, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF THE RARITY WITH WHICH EVENTS COULD MOVE IN THE FALKLANDS.

6. SIR MICHAEL BUTLER, WHOM I HAVE CONSULTED, AGREES THAT SUCH A BILATERAL WOULD BE USEFUL. YOU WILL NO DOUBT LET ME KNOW IF YOU WISH ME TO TRY TO ARRANGE ONE.

7. AN ADDITIONAL WAY OF HELPING TO SECURE TINDEMANS' WHOLEHEARTED SUPPORT OVER THE FALKLANDS WOULD BE TO RESPOND QUICKLY AND POSITIVELY TO THE BID WHICH HE MADE TO ME ON 4 MAY FOR BRITISH SUPPORT FOR A POSSIBLE EVENTUAL FURTHER COMMUNITY INITIATIVE OVER THE MIDDLE EAST (SEE MIFT).

JACKSON

FCO

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CABINET OFFICE

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2

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