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FM ROME 061615Z MAY 82

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TELEGRAM NO. 237 OF 06 MAY 82

INFO ROUTINE WASHINGTON, UKDEL NATO, UKREP BRUSSELS

SAVING FOR INFO OTHER EC POSTS

FALKLAND ISLANDS: ITALIAN REACTIONS

1. THERE WAS A REACTI~~ON~~ OF PROFOUND SHOCK IN ALL PARTS OF THE MEDIA TO THE NEWS OF BRITISH AND ARGENTINE DEATHS IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC. ALL NEWSPAPER HEADLINES OF 05 MAY SPOKE OF "HUNDREDS" OF VICTIMS. THE GENERAL TONE WAS THAT THERE MUST BE SOME WAY OF STOPPING THE KILLING. FEW PAPERS TOOK SIDES AS BETWEEN BRITAIN AND ARGENTINA. THE OVERALL VIEW WAS THAT PRESSURE MUST BE BROUGHT ON BOTH SIDES IMMEDIATELY TO CEASE HOSTILITIES AND TO SEEK A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. MANY REPORTS POINTED OUT THAT EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY WITH BRITAIN WAS WEAKENING.
2. SIMILAR EDITORIALS IN (NXT WD UNDLND) POPOLO (CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT) AND (NXT WD UNDLND) AVANTI (SOCIALIST) ON 05 MAY ASKED WHETHER THE COSTS OF THE CONFLICT WERE JUSTIFIED. AVANTI IMPLIED THAT BRITAIN WAS INVOKING "NINETEENTH CENTURY" CONCEPTS OF PRINCIPLE AND NATIONALISM. THE PAPER WAS ALSO WORRIED THAT THIS CONFLICT WAS DAMAGING NORTH/SOUTH RELATIONS, CAUSING ECONOMIC DAMAGE TO EUROPE AND PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO THE SOVIET UNION. THESE POINTS WERE PICKED UP ELSEWHERE.
3. AFTER THE IMMEDIATE SHOCK OVER THE LOSS OF LIVES, TODAY'S REPORTS ARE LESS HYSTERICAL, AND THERE IS A SENSE OF RELIEF THAT THE WAY TO NEGOTIATIONS SEEMS TO BE OPENING AGAIN. SENSATIONAL REPORTING CONTINUES, HOWEVER. SOME OF THE WILDER STORIES EMANATING FROM BUENOS AIRES ARE REPORTED UNCRITICALLY AS FACT, AND WE ARE SEEKING TO CORRECT THIS AS FAR AS POSSIBLE.

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4. NO CLEAR LINE EMERGES FROM ITALIAN REPORTING OVER THE PAST FEW DAYS. THE RIGHT OF CENTRE PRESS TENDS TO BE MORE UNDERSTANDING OF BRITAIN'S POSITION, BUT THIS DOES NOT ALWAYS HOLD TRUE, AS YESTERDAY'S (NXT WD UNDLND) POPOLO EDITORIAL SHOWS. THE CORRIERE DELLA SERA'S REPORTING IS AFFECTED BY THE PREJUDICES OF ITS LONDON CORRESPONDENT CIAN FANELLI AGAINST UK POLICIES. THE PRESS CLOSE TO THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI) AND TO THE SOCIALIST PARTY (PSI) IS USUALLY MORE READY TO CRITICISE BRITAIN FOR OVER-REACTING. BUT TODAY'S (NXT WD UNDLND) REPUBBLICA (LEFTWING) HAS A VERY GOOD LEADER WHICH SAYS THAT BRITAIN IS RIGHT TO TAKE A STAND AGAINST THE ARGENTINE DICTATORS. (FULL TEXT BY TELELETTER TO INFORMATION DEPARTMENT). IN GENERAL, WHENEVER THERE IS MILITARY ACTION, (REGARDLESS OF WHO SHOOTS FIRST) BRITAIN WILL BE CRITICISED. THE ITALIANS FIND IT HARD TO ACCEPT THAT IT MAY BE IMPOSSIBLE TO AVOID MILITARY CONFLICT.
5. FCO PSE PASS SAVING ADDRESSEES.

ARCULUS

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