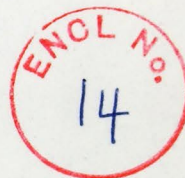


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FOR CWG

PRIORITY/PRIORITY 080315Z APR 82

FROM COMMCEN FCO LONDON
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FM MEXICO CITY 080315Z APR 82

TO PRIORITY FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 263 OF 8 APRIL

AND TO ROUTINE WASHINGTON AND UKMIS NEW YORK

MY TELNO 256: FALKLAND ISLANDS

1. THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT'S STATEMENT ON THE DISPUTE WAS MORE HELPFUL THAN I HAD FEARED IT WOULD BE. AFTER THE BOW OF SUPPORT FOR THE VALIDITY OF THE ARGENTINE CLAIM, AND THE NEED NOT TO PROLONG NEGOTIATIONS OVER IT, IT MOVED STEADILY IN OUR DIRECTION WITH AN OUTRIGHT CONDEMNATION OF THE USE OF FORCE, A REFERENCE TO THE BAD PRECEDENT SET BY THE ARGENTINE ACTION FOR OTHER TERRITORIAL CLAIMS, AND A CALL FOR RESPECT FOR THE DECISION OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL.

2. THERE IS A GROWING TENDENCY IN MEXICO TO BELIEVE THAT THE LEGALITY OF THE ARGENTINE CLAIM IS FULLY ESTABLISHED. THIS TENDENCY WILL NOW BE REINFORCED. HOW EVER MUCH WE MAY TALK ABOUT OUR LONG EXERCISE OF SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE ISLANDS AND THE WISHES OF THE INHABITANTS TO REMAIN BRITISH, THE MEXICANS, WHO ARE A LITIGIOUS LOT, SEE THE FALKLANDS AS PART OF THE INHERITANCE OF SPAIN WHICH DEVOLVED UPON ARGENTINA. IN PUTTING OUR CASE TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY AND TO THE PRESS, I HAVE FOUND MYSELF SOMEWHAT HANDICAPPED FOR LACK OF LEGAL COUNTER ARGUMENT. IN PARTICULAR IT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO KNOW WHETHER WE CLAIMED THE ISLANDS AFTER LANDING ON THEM IN 1690, WHAT ATTITUDE WE TOOK TOWARDS THE FRENCH AND LATER SPANISH OCCUPATIONS IN THE 18TH CENTURY AND WHETHER WE CONTESTED THE LEGALITY OF THE ARGENTINE OCCUPATION BEFORE 1833. THE EARLY HISTORY MAY SEEM IRRELEVANT IN CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT FOR THE MEXICANS IT IS THE WEAKEST PART OF OUR CASE, AND I SHOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR WHAT GUIDANCE YOU CAN GIVE.

3. AT PRESENT OUR POSITION ENJOYS CONSIDERABLE SYMPATHY IN MEXICO. WE HAVE HAD MANY MESSAGES OF SUPPORT (INCLUDING ONE FROM A SERVING MEXICAN ADMIRAL WHO HOPED FOR THE EARLY DESTRUCTION OF THE ARGENTINE FLEET). BUT IF FIGHTING BEGAN, THE MEXICAN CONDEMNATION OF THE USE OF FORCE WOULD OF COURSE TEND TO SWING AGAINST US AS IT NOW SWINGS AGAINST THE ARGENTINES.

4. FCO PLEASE PASS AS NECESSARY.

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