



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

5 April 1982

A J Coles Esq
10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister
has seen.

A.J.C. 6/4.

Peer John,

FALKLAND ISLANDS

ABL 6/4
h.c.

1. You asked in your letter of 4 April to Brian Fall for an analysis of whether the Argentine press and public statements by the Government of the Argentine Republic should have shown well before the most recent events that there was an intention to invade the Falkland Islands. You also asked about possible evidence in letters from Falkland Islanders.
2. At Sir Michael Palliser's request, I enclose the following:-
 - (a) a note (JIC(82)(N)29 (^{Final}~~Draft~~)) prepared by the Assessments Staff summarising developments from December 1981 onwards
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 - (b) a chronology of Argentine press comments and public statements between late December 1981 and March 1982;
 - (c) an analysis of Argentine governmental and press comment during earlier periods of tension;
 - (d) a note on letters in recent months from Falkland Islanders.
3. The analysis of Argentine comment and governmental statements in recent months shows that, although there were a number of references in the Argentine press to the possibility of an invasion, many of these appeared in one newspaper ('La Prensa') and were indeed the work of one journalist (a point also made in paragraph 3 of the Assessments Staff note). The general effect was that the nationalistic clamour on the Falklands which has always been a feature of the jingoistic Argentine press was stepped up, but not to the point where it could be said to amount to a clear indicator of the Argentine Government's intentions. Government statements reflected a harder line than that taken by the

/previous



previous Argentine administration; but the overall evidence (see the Assessment Staff's analysis) was that the Argentines remained committed to finding a solution by diplomatic means. To the extent that the press may have been officially inspired, the objective would have been to demonstrate Argentine impatience, at the time of the New York talks, for progress through negotiations on Argentine terms. This press comment also had to be set in our assessment of Argentine intentions against the repeated Argentine assurances made to the United States as well as to ourselves that they continued to give priority to a negotiated settlement on sovereignty.

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4. Comparison with the analysis of the tone of Argentine press and government comment during earlier periods of crisis suggests that there has been no particular correlation between words and deeds. On a number of occasions, bellicose statements have been made by the Argentine press and to some extent by the Argentine Government, but in the end the crisis has passed over. The Shackleton incident in 1976 was potentially of a far graver nature than that in South Georgia.

5. The analysis of the very few letters received from Falkland Islanders in recent months shows that in so far as they were concerned about the prospect of an Argentine invasion, this concern was largely based on what was appearing in the Argentine press and therefore did not constitute independent evidence.

6. Finally, you will see that the Assessments Staff note concludes from the available evidence that the Argentine decision to order the task force to invade the Falkland Islands was almost certainly not taken earlier than 28/29 March, and could have been taken as late as 31 March or even 1 April. The note does not refer to our own despatch, at the initiative of the Foreign and Defence Secretaries, of an SSN on 30 March and of two further SSNs by 1 April.

* ~ * Passages deleted and retained under Section 3(4).

CA Wayland,
1 May 2012

Yours ever,
Andrew
R A Burns
Private Secretary to the
Permanent Under Secretary

cc: M S Webb Esq, MOD
D J Wright Esq, CABINET OFFICE

CHRONOLOGY OF ARGENTINE PRESS COMMENT AND
PUBLIC STATEMENTS (END-DECEMBER 1981 - MARCH 1982)

- 22 December: Inauguration of President Galtieri. Inaugural speech emphasises need to stay firmly allied to the West and contains no direct reference to the Falklands.
- 29 December: Editorial in La Nacion emphasises Argentina's 'sovereign and unquestionable rights, based on historical and juridical factors' in the South Atlantic, and refers to establishment of research station on Southern Thule as reconfirmation of Argentine presence in area and 'civilized expression of exemplary scientific work'.

Until mid-January, press largely concerned with moves by Galtieri and his administration to consolidate their position in power.

- 24 January: Article in La Prensa entitled 'Foreign Affairs Offensive', by Iglesias Rouco, refers to Argentine conditions for the continuation of negotiations which, if not accepted by Britain, would result in immediate breaking-off of relations. Also refers to probable US support for 'any action leading to recovery of the islands, not excluding military action' and to the belief 'in the US and Europe that ... Buenos Aires will recover the islands by force this year ... although the government may not have foreseen this alternative, a military attempt to resolve the dispute cannot be ruled out when sovereignty is at stake. Moreover, it is calculated that such an operation will be relatively simple in view of the scant military resources of the area.'
- 3 February: Article in magazine Siete Dias entitled 'Enough?', calls 1982 the key year for effective recovery of the islands and draws attention to New York talks which could end in either bilateral agreement or, 'if the English persist in their systematic procrastination, in armed intervention to get back that part of our territory



usurped 149 years ago'. Also refers to demands in Argentina for 'explosive military operation', a 'final thrust to end this matter which affects our territorial integrity and national pride'. Emphasises Argentina's intention to persist in peaceful approach in hope that 'faced with the real alternative of armed occupation, the UK will ... press negotiations to a final conclusion'.

- 7 February: La Prensa terms the Falklands 'a now intolerable problem'. Says that determination by Argentine government 'conforms to most positive chapter of its policy'. The Government 'is not prepared to continue talking indefinitely, nor to put before the UN again something on which that organisation has already pronounced. If London does not agree to bind itself to a written timetable, Buenos Aires will apparently reserve the right to take other action ... which by no means excludes recovery of islands by military means'.
- 9 February: Editorial in Buenos Aires Herald called 'The Tough Approach' says that the dispute has gone on 'for far too long and that unless solved in the only reasonable way - by transferring the islands to Argentina, it will be resolved in a messy and damaging way that will harm the interests of everyone involved ... and it is time that the British, deservedly famous for the intelligent realism of their foreign policy, recognised this and took the only sensible course open to them'.
- 12 February: Captain Raúl Suarez del Cerro, Governor of Tierra del Fuego, reported in La Nacion as saying that he hoped God would give him an opportunity to become governor of the Falklands before the end of the Argentine Government's term of office.
- 18 February: Iglesias Rouco, in La Prensa, claims that 'the time is approaching for Buenos Aires to think of force ... based on reason, capacity and necessity'.




26/27 February: Anglo-Argentine talks in New York.

- 2 March: Statement by Argentine MFA following talks reserves Argentina's negotiating right to terminate procedure 'and to choose freely the procedure which best accords with her interests' in absence of progress towards early settlement. Unnamed government spokesman, quoted by La Nacion, recalls former Foreign Minister's assertion that islands' status was 'unsustainable' and states that although plans exist for economic and diplomatic measures against Britain in absence of progress, suggestions of possibility of armed force could 'at the moment' be discounted.
- 3 March: La Prensa draws attention to Argentina's dissatisfaction with New York talks as result of which 'it is very seriously considering possibility of a rupture with Britain in near future, which will include military occupation of islands'. Also refers to 'prospect of an escalation which could easily end in the taking of the islands by force'.
- 9 March: Argentine agency dispatch from Brasilia reports statement by Argentine Foreign Minister that Argentina dissatisfied with negotiations started 17 years ago, but was nevertheless willing to try all means provided by UN Charter to recover sovereignty over islands.
- 12 March: La Prensa article, probably inspired by government, criticises support by UK media for islanders' wishes.

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

4 April 1982



ANALYSIS OF ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT AND
PRESS ATTITUDES DURING PREVIOUS CRISES

1. In 1963, the Government of President Illia decided to press its claim through the United Nations. In 1964, the Falkland Islands was made a major target for Argentine diplomacy and internal propaganda. A government-inspired publicity campaign which included the institution of 'Malvinas Day', the promotion of demonstrations and lectures, etc, kept the issue in the public eye. Minor outrages were perpetrated against the British Embassy and three Vice-Consulates. In September, an Argentine pilot landed at Port Stanley, planted an Argentine flag and handed over a letter purporting to be a proclamation of sovereignty over the Islands. Although the Argentine Government disassociated itself from this incident, after a strong protest from Britain, the pilot received a hero's welcome and favourable treatment by the media on his return to Buenos Aires. The incident occurred simultaneously with the opening of discussion on the Falkland Islands in the UN Committee of 24.
2. The Condor incident. A similar incident occurred in 1966 when an Argentine Airlines DC-4, on a routine flight, was hijacked by a group of young Argentine right-wing extremists and directed to Port Stanley, where it made a forced landing on the race-track. 'Operation Condor' was followed by rowdy demonstrations all over Argentina in support of the claim to the Islands. The British Consulate in Rosario was attacked and shots fired at the Embassy when the Duke of Edinburgh, on an official visit to Buenos Aires, was inside. The 'invasion' was immediately praised by Peronist trade unions, which threatened strikes if the extremists were punished for their action. The Ongania government however condemned the incident (largely because Anglo-Argentine negotiations on the dispute were proceeding in a good climate). Encouraged by the strong lead taken by the Government, Argentine press coverage of the incident was however relatively objective.



3. RRS Shackleton incident (1975-6). In December 1975, Lord Shackleton visited on the RRS Shackleton to conduct a survey of economic development potential. This aroused strong Argentine hostility; and on 4 February 1976, an Argentine warship fired shots across the RRS Shackleton's bows. This led to the withdrawal of Ambassadors.

4. Before the arrival of RRS Shackleton in the Islands, the Argentine Navy sent messages threatening to arrest the ship if she began operations within 200 miles of the mainland. The Argentine UN Permanent Representative termed the visit "a unilateral and inconsiderate action by Great Britain which could have grave consequences". Argentines, he said, had reached the limits of their tolerance: and their patience should not be underestimated. Press speculation about the purpose of the ship's presence was rife, with a number of newspapers taking the opportunity to raise the sovereignty issue in strident terms. For example, La Nacion (November 1975) warned Britain that 'Argentina will not tolerate a return to imperialist methods', and other papers carried headlines that 'London should not go against the grain of history'. The press attempted to whip up public sentiment against British sovereignty over the Falklands as a "typical act of piracy". A public opinion poll conducted by the leading weekly magazine 'Siete Dias' claimed that more than 60% of the Argentine population favoured an invasion of the Islands. There were reports that "concrete measures" would be taken to protect Argentina's interests, including the possibility of military action against the Islands.

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LETTERS FROM FALKLAND ISLANDERS

1. The FCO are aware of only three letters from islanders since the date when General Galtieri became President of Argentina, all of them addressed to Members of Parliament. (There were also very few letters in the preceding few months.)
2. Of these letters, one, from the wife of an Island Councillor to Mr Julian Critchley MP, who sent a copy to Mr Luce, covered a number of points, including the withdrawal of HMS ENDURANCE, but did not refer to a possible Argentine invasion.
3. The two letters which did refer to the possibility of an Argentine invasion came from Mrs K. Bertrand, of Port Stanley (not a councillor) and were addressed to Sir Bernard Braine MP, who referred them to Mr Luce for comment. The first, dated 16 March, said that: 'Argentina is using broadcasts and newspapers to threaten us. They are saying that unless Britain hands over the Falklands this year, they will invade before the end of the year ... most of us feel that this is mainly a war of nerves, but there remains the possibility that a group will do just that, and we feel very strongly that Britain should make it quite clear to them that they would not take such an action tamely but would answer force with force.'
4. Mrs Bertrand's second letter, dated 9 March said: 'I do not know if you are aware that Argentine press (including the official press) is threatening to invade the threat is that unless Britain settles the dispute in their favour very soon they will be obliged to take the Islands over. It is mostly a war of nerves, no doubt then last week a heavy aircraft, probably a Hercules, flew over this town at 3 am, and was low enough to waken people up'.
5. Thus Mrs Bertrand's letters were prompted largely by Argentine press comment of which we were already aware. Overflights of the kind to which she refers have occurred from time to time for a long period, and we have always protested whenever the aircraft has been identified as Argentine. There was no increase in the period leading up to the invasion.

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