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FM BUENOS AIRES 29/1440Z MAR 82
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGRAM NUMBER 118 OF 29 MARCH 1982
AND TO IMMEDIATE PORT STANLEY

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29 MAR 1982	

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SOUTH GEORGIA : ARGENTINE PRESS TREATMENT

1. THE FOCUS OF TODAY'S HEADLINES IS ON LOCAL DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY, WITH SOME CONTINUED SPECULATION ABOUT BOTH BRITISH AND ARGENTINE SHIP MOVEMENTS.

2. ALL NEWSPAPERS STATE THAT THE ARGENTINE FOREIGN MINISTER HAS NOW DELIVERED A FORMAL REPLY TO AN EARLIER QUOTE INFORMAL UNQUOTE BRITISH PROPOSAL FOR RESOLVING THE SOUTH GEORGIA PROBLEM, BUT NONE HINT AT THE CONTENT OF EITHER. COSTA MENDEZ IS QUOTED WIDELY AS SAYING THAT THE SITUATION IS QUOTE GRAVE AND TENSE UNQUOTE, AND IT IS GENERALLY ASSUMED THAT THE BALL IS NOW IN BRITAIN'S COURT.

3. REPORTS CONTINUE OF THE MOVEMENT OF RRS JOHN BISCOE FROM MONTEVIDEO TO PORT STANLEY WITH MARINES ON BOARD, BUT YESTERDAY'S PRESS REPORTS THAT SHE WAS A QUOTE WARSHIP UNQUOTE HAVE NOW BEEN CORRECTED. THERE ARE ALSO CONTINUED PRESS REPORTS THAT FIVE ARGENTINE WARSHIPS (TWO CORVETTES, TWO DESTROYERS AND A SUBMARINE) HAVE BEEN DESPATCHED TOWARDS SOUTH GEORGIA, AND THAT ALL NAVY LEAVE HAS BEEN CANCELLED.

4. MOST NEWSPAPERS ALSO REPORT TODAY THAT A CGT DEMONSTRATION PLANNED TO TAKE PLACE IN BUENOS AIRES ON 30 MARCH IN PROTEST AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC POLICIES MAY BE CANCELLED OR CHANGED INTO A QUOTE DEFENCE OF NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY UNQUOTE DEMONSTRATION.

5. YESTERDAY'S EDITION OF CLARIN INCLUDED ASSERTIONS BY DAVIDOFF'S COMPANY, THE QUOTE EMPRESA GEORGIAS DEL SUR UNQUOTE, THAT ALL MEMBERS OF HIS GROUP IN SOUTH GEORGIA HAD BEEN PROVIDED WITH WHITE CARDS BEFORE DEPARTURE. ONE OTHER NEWSPAPER COMMENTED ON AN INSIDE PAGE THAT THE CORE OF THE PROBLEM APPEARED TO BE ONE OF IMMIGRATION PROCEDURES. BUT THIS ASPECT HAS BEEN GENERALLY IGNORED.

6. THERE HAS STILL BEEN VERY LITTLE EDITORIAL COMMENT, ALTHOUGH IN A COMMENTARY IN THE BUENOS AIRES HERALD THE NEWSPAPER'S EDITOR JAMES NEILSON SEES THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT AS MAKING THE MOST OF THE ISSUE TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM DOMESTIC DIFFICULTIES.

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