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Se refiere a:

20ABR82 2145Z – UKEBras a FCO. Postura de Brasil.

(FCO 7/4123) (desclasificado 2016)

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TELEGRAM NUMBER 114 OF 20 APRIL

INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON

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MY TELNO 094: BRAZIL'S ATTITUDE TO THE FALKLANDS DISPUTE

- (17)
1. IN THE LIGHT OF ARGENTINA'S MOVE TO CONVENE A CONSULTATIVE MEETING OF THE RIO TREATY, YOU MAY WISH TO HAVE THE FOLLOWING UP-TO-DATE ASSESSMENT OF BRAZILIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE FALKLANDS CRISIS.
 2. THE OFFICIAL BRAZILIAN POSTURE IN RELATION TO OUR DISPUTE WITH ARGENTINA REMAINS COLOURED BY PRESIDENT FIGUEIREDO'S PERSONAL PREDILECTION FOR ARGENTINA, WHICH IS SHARED STRONGLY BY GENERAL WALTER PIRES, THE ARMY MINISTER. NEVERTHELESS, I AND MY STAFF DISCERN A CONTINUING OFFICIAL ANXIETY ABOUT THE EVENTUAL OUTCOME OF THE CRISIS NO MATTER WHICH SIDE WINS. AMONG THE SENIOR MILITARY THERE IS NO LOVE FOR THE ARGENTINES. THE RECENT RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN BRAZIL AND ARGENTINA IS STILL TOO NEW TO HAVE TAKEN DEEP ROOT: AND WE CONSIDER THAT MANY SENIOR OFFICERS WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE ARGENTINES TAKEN DOWN A PEG. AT THE LOWER MILITARY LEVELS OPINION IS NEUTRAL. THE SERIOUS PRESS IS CRITICAL OF ARGENTINE IRRESPONSIBILITY. THE MORE POPULAR PAPERS HAVE TENDED TO REPORT SENSATIONALLY BUT HAVE SHOWN NO SPECIAL BIAS EITHER WAY.
 3. A FEATURE OF THE BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CHARACTER IS A RELUCTANCE TO STAND UP AND BE COUNTED. THE PRAGMATIC, LOW-PROFILE AND NON-CONTROVERSIAL FOREIGN POLICY OF THE ITAMARATY HAS HITHERTO ENJOYED WIDESPREAD APPROVAL FOR THIS REASON. THE CURRENT CRISIS CAUSES SERIOUS DISCOMFORT TO THE BRAZILIAN GOVERNMENT. WHATEVER THE OUTCOME, THEY SEE IT AS BEING LIKELY TO BE TO THEIR DISADVANTAGE. IF THE ARGENTINES ARE DEFEATED, THEY FEEL BRAZIL WILL BE BLAMED BY A RESENTFUL ARGENTINA FOR NOT HAVING ADEQUATELY SUPPORTED HER. THIS WOULD RUIN THE CAREFULLY-NURTURED POLICY OF ARGENTINE-BRAZILIAN RAPPROCHEMENT WHICH IS THE KEYSTONE OF BRAZIL'S LATIN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY, AND WHICH PRESIDENT FIGUEIREDO APPEARS TO REGARD AS HIS OWN PERSONAL ACHIEVEMENT. IF, ON THE OTHER HAND, GALTIERI COMES OUT ON TOP, THE BRAZILIANS FEAR THE CHAIN REACTION OF EXAMPLE IN OTHER SENSITIVE AREAS IN LATIN AMERICA, PARTICULARLY VENEZUELA-GUYANA. THEY ARE ALSO APPREHENSIVE ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF FURTHER ARGENTINE ADVENTURES. MANIFESTATIONS OF SPANISH-AMERICAN VISCERAL SUPPORT FOR ARGENTINA ONLY SERVE TO INCREASE THEIR ALARM. THEIR POSITION AT THE MOMENT IS, IN CONSEQUENCE, ONE OF ANGUISHED NON-INVOLVEMENT AND A PIOUS HOPE THAT MR HAIG'S EFFORTS MAY BRING ABOUT A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION.

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4. I AM REPORTING SEPARATELY (MY TELNO 115) ON POSSIBLE ECONOMIC REPERCUSSIONS OF THE CRISIS. IN PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES THESE CONSIDERATIONS, PLUS THEIR NATURAL CAUTION, ARE LIKELY TO DISSUADE THE BRAZILIANS FROM ADOPTING AN OUTRIGHT POSITION OF ACTIVE SUPPORT FOR ARGENTINA IF THE LATTER SUCCEEDS, AS SEEMS PROBABLE, IN CONVENING A CONSULTATIVE MEETING OF THE RIO TREATY OF RECIPROCAL ASSISTANCE. AT ANY SUCH MEETING THE BRAZILIANS WILL MANOEUVRE TO PREVENT THE ADOPTION OF A MANDATORY RESOLUTION. BUT THEIR LEGALISTIC APPROACH TO TREATY OBLIGATIONS, REINFORCED BY THEIR DESIRE NOT TO BE SEEN TO BE TURNING THEIR BACKS ON ARGENTINA, WOULD PROBABLY MAKE THEM FEEL OBLIGED TO COMPLY, AT LEAST OSTENSIBLY, WITH A MANDATORY RESOLUTION, IF ONE IS ADOPTED. THEY WOULD, HOWEVER, PROBABLY INTERPRET THEIR OBLIGATIONS LOOSELY; AND TAKING REFUGE UNDER ARTICLE 20, THEY WOULD REFUSE OVERT MILITARY ASSISTANCE IF THIS WERE REQUESTED BY THE ARGENTINES.

5. IN THE EVENT OF ARMED CONFLICT BETWEEN THE UK AND ARGENTINA, OPINION WOULD HARDEN SOMEWHAT. THE BRAZILIANS WOULD PROBABLY CHOOSE TO VIEW THE UK AS THE AGGRESSOR AND MIGHT TAKE US TO TASK PUBLICLY. DEPENDING ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES THEY MIGHT ALSO FEEL OBLIGED TO WITHDRAW THEIR AMBASSADOR IN LONDON. BUT THEY WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY STOP SHORT OF A BREAK IN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, WHICH THEY WOULD SEE AS PUTTING AT RISK THEIR ALL-IMPORTANT INTERNATIONAL BORROWING PROGRAMME. ANY MEASURES THEY FELT THEY SHOULD TAKE WOULD BE DESIGNED TO OBTAIN ARGENTINE GRATITUDE AT MINIMUM COST TO THEMSELVES AND WITHOUT COMMITMENT TO DIRECT ACTION IN THE DISPUTE ITSELF.

6. IN SHORT, THE BRAZILIANS WILL CONTINUE TO USE ALL THEIR INGENUITY TO AVOID DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN THE DISPUTE. IF THEY DO DECIDE TO GIVE ANY SUPPORT TO THE ARGENTINES, IT WILL BE AS INEXPENSIVE AND INSUBSTANTIAL AS THEY CAN MAKE IT.

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