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23 April 1982

CABINET

DEFENCE AND OVERSEAS POLICY (OFFICIAL) COMMITTEE
SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

INTERNATIONAL REACTION TO THE ARGENTINE INVASION
OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

Note by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

General

1. As of 6 pm on 22 April the situation was as follows: Interest continued to be shown around the world, with perhaps some diminution of press interest. Latin American attitudes appeared to be hardening still further in favour of Argentina. There are indications that in some Latin American countries we have come to be regarded as the aggressor. On the other hand there has been a strengthening of the basically pro-British position in the United States. European countries continued to offer strong support although Commonwealth support appeared to be stable. The Argentinians continued to

be very active in their propaganda efforts. It became apparent that in the event of the use of force by us attitudes would change considerably, and not for the better, in Latin America and Europe.

2. On 20 April the Organisation of American States (OAS) voted overwhelmingly in favour of Argentina's request to convene a special Foreign Ministers Meeting to consider the possibility of assistance for Argentina under the 1947 Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance, the Rio Treaty. The United States, Colombia and Trinidad

/and

and Tobago (the only Commonwealth party to the Treaty) abstained. The meeting is to take place on 26 April. This vote has been seen as a serious diplomatic set-back for Britain. If the Argentinians succeed at the Foreign Ministers meeting in getting a two-thirds majority in favour of economic and other sanctions and in getting a resolution supporting their position and denouncing the threat to peace imposed by the Fleet, this will inevitably have an impact on Third World opinion. The Americans are very concerned at this unhelpful development, and are lobbying hard on our behalf. Mexico is likely to be helpful, and will work for a balanced resolution but she is not certain to vote against Argentina.

3. Argentina has requested the meeting of the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America (OPANAL) in Washington this weekend, to consider application of the Treaty of Tlatelolco (banning nuclear weapons in Latin America) to the Task Force. The Argentinian contention is that Protocol I to the treaty prohibits the use of nuclear propelled submarines in hemispheric waters. The majority of countries represented - Peru, Honduras, Uruguay and Mexico - are relatively well-disposed to us. The Argentinians have sent trade union leaders and politicians to other Latin American States, and in an effort to woo Mexico have promised the release of a long-term refugee, presently housed in the Mexican Embassy in Buenos Aires.

4. Some Latin American countries (Panama and Venezuela) have implied willingness to help Argentina militarily in the event of hostilities. Minor anti-British popular demonstrations have been held in Caracas and there is no doubt that a rupture in diplomatic relations would immediately follow military action. An element in the hardening of Latin American opinion has been the European Community's economic sanctions against Argentina and their consequent support for the Argentinian thesis that this must be considered an economic aggression against Latin America. Brazil remains on the side-lines. We have been assured /that

that the Brazilian naval manoeuvres due to take place in the near future will be within the confines of Brazilian territorial waters. Chile continues to be privately sympathetic.

5. The hardening of Latin American opinion has been echoed in Spain. The extreme right-wing Falange organisation staged a march in Madrid on 19 April to express Spanish support for Argentina over the Falklands, and mustered a reasonable crowd. It is clear that the Spanish government does not want to get too far out of line with her future European partners and allies on this issue, but Spanish popular feeling is very pro-Argentine.

6. The European Parliament has condemned the invasion and strong public support continues to be given by Chancellor Schmidt and the French. The French Foreign Minister has, however, said in private that should force be used to settle the dispute, the position of our EC partners might change. The Germans have contented themselves with expressing a strong wish to see a peaceful solution to the dispute. The Irish position has continued to be less firm than that of our other European partners. Ireland's Foreign Minister spoke on Irish television on 20 April of Ireland's overriding concern to stop a greater conflict. They have recently shown reluctance to support Britain's proposal for a series of demarches by the Belgium Presidency in Third countries. The impression remains that they might be seeking some sort of peace-keeping role for themselves. The Italian government may be becoming increasingly susceptible to internal opinion; another factor may be that there is a large Italian community in Argentina. An Argentine Delegation was listened to with interest in Rome recently. Additional support for the British position has come from Norway, who on 19 April publicly banned imports from Argentina. Similar measures have not been taken by Sweden, but both Sweden and Portugal have given us private assurances that no arms exports will be made to Argentina. The Swiss government have told us privately that Switzerland could not for reasons of principle join in collective sanctions, but have said that they intend to ensure that Switzerland

/was

was not used by Argentina to circumvent measures taken by other countries.

7. There has been little change in Commonwealth opinion. The Canadians have decided that their Ambassador should return to Buenos Aires and the Australians appear to be on the point of doing the same. There are signs that New Zealand domestic opinion may be less than wholehearted in its support for the Government's actions taken so far. Malta and Cyprus, hitherto silent, have both indicated that support from them will not go beyond the favourable Council of Europe resolution.

8. The United States have continued to support us strongly, as has the American press and opinion in Congress. Mr Haig has given us a private assurance that if the Argentinians were wholly intransigent, the US would apply economic sanctions against them. Senator Moynihan has introduced into the Senate a "sense of the house" resolution proposing economic sanctions against Argentina until she complies with SCR 502. The Americans, like the Germans, are showing increasing signs of nervousness at Soviet involvement in the dispute. The Japanese are still sitting on the fence.