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TELEGRAM NUMBER 176 OF 5 APRIL

INFO IMMEDIATE UKDEL NATO, UKMIS NEW YORK, WASHINGTON

YOUR TEL NO 188 : FALKLAND ISLANDS : SOVIET ATTITUDE

1. PRESS COVERAGE HERE HAS BEEN CAUTIOUS, BRIEF, AND SELECTIVELY FACTUAL. THE IMPRESSION GIVEN IS THAT THE SOVIET PRESS HAS BEEN CAUGHT ON THE HOP BY THE SWIFT DEVELOPMENT OF THE CRISIS: AND THAT THE RUSSIANS ARE HAVING DIFFICULTY ELABORATING A CLEAR LINE ON WHAT IS FOR THEM AN AWKWARD SITUATION.

2. WHILE THERE IS NO CLEAR EVIDENCE YET THAT THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING DOWN ON ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER, ONE OR TWO POINTERS SUGGEST THE BEGINNING OF A DRIFT TOWARDS THE ARGENTINIAN POSITION SINCE THE SEIZURE OF THE ISLANDS. THE INVASION (WHICH HAS BEEN DESCRIBED ONLY AS AN "OCCUPATION") HAS NOT BEEN CONDEMNED IN THE PRESS: AND ALTHOUGH NO OVERT SUPPORT HAS YET BEEN GIVEN FOR ARGENTINIAN ACTIONS, THE PRESS HAS REPORTED EVENTS IN A WAY IN WHICH ARGENTINA IS UNLIKELY TO FIND UNACCEPTABLE. LAST WEEK THE ISLANDS WERE REFERRED TO AS THE FALKLANDS. SINCE THE INVASION

THEY ARE NOW CALLED THE FALKLANDS (MILITARY) THE RUSSIANS

WHICH ARGENTINA IS UNLIKELY TO FIND UNACCEPTABLE. LAST WEEK THE ISLANDS WERE REFERRED TO AS THE FALKLANDS. SINCE THE INVASION THEY ARE NOW CALLED THE "FALKLANDS (MALVINAS)". THE PRESS HAS REPORTED THE UNITED STATES' CALL FOR ARGENTINA TO WITHDRAW, BUT DID NOT MENTION THE SIMILAR CALL IN THE U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION, OR THE FACT THAT THE SOVIET UNION ABSTAINED IN THE VOTE. PRAVDA THIS MORNING CONFINED ITSELF TO SAYING THAT THE RESOLUTION CALLED FOR BOTH SIDES TO SETTLE THE DISPUTE BY DIPLOMATIC MEANS (ALTHOUGH IT ALSO REPORTED ARGENTINA'S REJECTION OF THE RESOLUTION).

3. AGAINST THIS, ALTHOUGH AT ONE STAGE LAST WEEK THE UK WAS ACCUSED IN THE PRESS OF RAISING TENSION, THE EMERGENCY DEBATES IN PARLIAMENT AND THE ASSEMBLY OF THE NAVAL TASK FORCE HAVE BEEN REPORTED WITHOUT COMMENT.

4. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND MY PRELIMINARY REACTIONS TO THE QUESTION POSED IN YOUR T.U.R. ARE AS FOLLOWS.

5. GENERAL. THE RUSSIANS WILL PROBABLY WISH TO DELAY FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE COMING DOWN FIRMLY ON ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER. THEY WILL NOT TRY TO LEAD INTERNATIONAL OPINION. THEY ARE ALMOST CERTAINLY FINDING IT DIFFICULT TO ASSESS WHERE THE WEIGHT OF THEIR INTEREST LIES. ON THE ONE HAND, DESPITE AFGHANISTAN AND THEIR IDEOLOGICAL SUPPORT FOR DECOLONISATION, THEY DO NOT LIKE TO SEE THE STATUS QUO UPSET VIOLENTLY IN SITUATIONS OVER WHICH THEY HAVE NO CONTROL. THEY MUST ALSO FEAR THAT WITH THE ISLANDS UNDER ARGENTINE CONTROL THERE IS A RISK THAT MILITARY FACILITIES WILL BE OFFERED TO THE UNITED STATES (PRAVDA THIS MORNING REPORTED A DENIAL BY THE ARGENTINE MFA THAT THE AMERICANS WOULD BE ALLOWED TO ESTABLISH MILITARY BASES). ON THE OTHER HAND, DESPITE THE ABOVE AND THE POLITICAL COMPLEXION OF THE ARGENTINE REGIME, THERE IS ALMOST CERTAIN TO BE A NATURAL BIAS IN FAVOUR OF ARGENTINA BECAUSE OF THE LATTER'S MEMBERSHIP OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT AND ITS ROLE AS A MAJOR SUPPLIER TO THE SOVIET UNION OF GRAIN AND OTHER COMMODITIES. A KEY CONSIDERATION WILL BE NON-ALIGNED AND THIRD WORLD OPINION GENERALLY, THE WEIGHT OF WHICH THE SOVIET UNION WILL ON PAST FORM FOLLOW.

6. HOSTILITIES. THE SOVIET ATTITUDE WILL BE LARGELY GOVERNED BY HOW THIRD WORLD OPINION HAS EVOLVED IF AND WHEN HOSTILITIES RESUME. IT WOULD BE UNUSUAL FOR THEM TO SUPPORT THE USE OF FORCE IN INTERNATIONAL DISPUTES BY ANYONE BUT THEMSELVES AND THEIR ALLIES AND PROXIES. BUT WITH THEIR RESPECT FOR THE DEMANDS OF REALPOLITIK THEY WILL ALSO BE STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY THEIR ASSESSMENT OF WHO WILL WIN THE WAR.

THEY WILL ALSO BE STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY THEIR ASSESSMENT OF WHO WILL WIN THE WAR.

7. SANCTIONS. AGAIN, THIRD WORLD OPINION WILL BE IMPORTANT. BUT, GIVEN THE SCALE OF SOVIET/ARGENTINIAN TRADE, THE URGENT NEED FOR ARGENTINIAN GRAIN (ALL THE MORE PRESSING NOW THAT A FIGURE FOR LAST YEAR'S HARVEST OF ONLY 158 MILLION TONNES IS BEING OPENLY DISCUSSED HERE), AND SOVIET PUBLIC HOSTILITY TO THE PRINCIPLE OF ECONOMIC SANCTIONS IN THE AFGHANISTAN AND POLAND CONTEXT, THERE WILL BE A VERY STRONG RELUCTANCE TO SUPPORT SANCTIONS OF ANY KIND.

8. TO SUM UP : I DOUBT THAT WE CAN HOPE AT ANY STAGE FOR OPEN SOVIET SUPPORT. BUT IF ARGENTINA FAILS TO GAIN OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FROM THE THIRD WORLD AND IT LOOKS AS THOUGH SHE WILL BE THE LOSER IN ANY RESUMED HOSTILITIES, THE RUSSIANS MAY WELL TACITLY ACQUIESCE IN WHATEVER ACTION WE TAKE TO REGAIN THE FALKLANDS.

BROOKE TURNER

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