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MS

MIPT: FALKLANDS

1. WHEN I DELIVERED THE PRIME MINISTER'S REPLY TO PRESIDENT FIGUEIREDO TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER, HE READ IT WITHOUT COMMENT AND SAID THAT HE WOULD PASS IT AT ONCE TO THE PRESIDENCY. HE SAID THAT HE EXPECTED THAT PRESIDENT GALTIERI WOULD REPLY IN RATHER SIMILAR TERMS. WHEN I PRESSED HIM AS TO WHETHER SUCH A REPLY HAD YET BEEN RECEIVED, HE SAID THAT NO FORMAL REPLY HAD YET ARRIVED. WE HAVE DISCOVERED INDEPENDENTLY, HOWEVER, THAT AN IMMENSELY WORDY MESSAGE FROM GENERAL GALTIERI HAS ALREADY BEEN ISSUED BY THE ARGENTINE EMBASSY TO THE PRESS. THIS UNORTHODOX PROCEDURE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY ANNOY THE BRAZILIANS CONSIDERABLY.

2. I FOUND SR GUERREIRO IN PESSIMISTIC MOOD, THOUGH HE WAS IF ANYTHING FRIENDLIER THAN EVER. HE SEES WAR APPROACHING AND GREATLY FEARS THAT BRAZIL MIGHT BE DRAWN INTO IT. HE SAID THAT HE DID NOT THINK THAT BRAZIL COULD DO MUCH TO HELP, THOUGH THEIR OFFER REMAINED OPEN. I ASKED HIM OUTRIGHT WHETHER HE SAW UK/BRAZIL RELATIONS BEING HARMED BY DEVELOPMENTS OVER THE FALKLANDS. HE SAID THAT HE THOUGHT THEY MIGHT, IF THE MATTER WERE REFERRED AGAIN TO INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS AND POSITIONS

WERE ADOPTED THERE WHICH MIGHT BE CONFLICTING. I ALSO ASKED HIM WHETHER HE THOUGHT THAT THE ARGENTINES WOULD INVOKE THE RIO TREATY. HE SAID THAT HE THOUGHT THAT THEY WOULD HOLD OFF AT LEAST UNTIL MR HAIG'S NEGOTIATION HAD EXHAUSTED ITSELF.

3. IMMEDIATELY BEFORE THIS INTERVIEW I HAD SPENT THREE-QUARTERS OF AN HOUR WITH GENERAL MEDEIROS, THE MINISTER IN CHARGE OF THE NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE SERVICE AND RIGHT-HAND MAN OF PRESIDENT FIGUEIREDO. MEDEIROS, WHO IS A GOOD DEAL MORE FORTHRIGHT THAN GUERREIRO, SAID THAT HE THOUGHT THE ARGENTINE ACTION IN INVADING THE FALKLANDS WAS COMPLETELY CRAZY AND INCOMPREHENSIBLE. HE DID NOT SEE ANY EASY WAY OUT OF THE PRESENT IMPASSE. SO FAR AS THE MILITARY SITUATION ON THE GROUND WAS CONCERNED, HIS TENTATIVE VIEW WAS THAT IF WE CONFINED OURSELVES TO BLOCKADING THE FALKLANDS AND HELD OFF DIRECT HOSTILITIES WITH THE ARGENTINE FLEET, THE PRESSURE WE HAD MOBILISED AGAINST THE ARGENTINE ECONOMY WOULD BEGIN TO TELL VERY SOON. HE SAID THAT HE WAS KEENLY AWARE OF THE DANGER THAT THE ARGENTINE EXAMPLE MIGHT BE FOLLOWED BY OTHER LATIN AMERICAN STATES WHO WISHED TO SETTLE TERRITORIAL SCORES WITH THEIR NEIGHBOURS. HE ALSO SAW THE RISK OF SOVIET ADVANCEMENT OF THEIR INTERESTS, THOUGH HE WAS INCLINED TO DOUBT WHETHER THEY WOULD VENTURE ANY OF THEIR NAVAL FORCES ANYWHERE NEAR THE SCENE OF OPERATIONS. HE AGREED WITH ME THAT THEY WOULD PROBABLY OFFER MINIMAL AND INEXPENSIVE HELP TO THE ARGENTINES, WHICH WOULD REAP THEM MAXIMUM ARGENTINE GRATITUDE IN THE FUTURE. I ASKED WHETHER THE ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT DISCOVERED ON THE CUBAN AIRCRAFT WHICH WAS FORCED TO LAND AT BRASILIA ON 9 APRIL (MY TELNO 089) HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THIS. HE SAID THAT HE THOUGHT IT WAS JUST THE SORT OF ASSISTANCE THAT THE RUSSIANS WOULD HAVE IN MIND.

4. MEDEIROS MADE IT QUITE CLEAR THAT THE BRAZILIAN GOVERNMENT WISHED TO STEER WELL CLEAR OF ANY INVOLVEMENT IN POSSIBLE HOSTILITIES BETWEEN BRITAIN AND ARGENTINA. BRAZIL HAD NO REASON TO GET INVOLVED AND FEW MEANS TO DEFEND HER INTERESTS. NEVER THE LESS, SHE WOULD BE WILLING TO HELP IF THE HAIG MISSION FAILED AND NO OTHER AVENUE WAS ON OFFER. THE GOVERNMENT WERE QUITE CLEAR THAT THEY DID NOT WISH THE RIO TREATY TO BE INVOKED. IN REPLY TO MY QUESTION, HE ADMITTED THAT BRAZIL WAS SEEN TO BE LEANING TO THE SIDE OF ARGENTINA: BUT HE SUGGESTED THAT SHE MIGHT STILL HAVE A USEFUL ROLE TO PLAY AS AN UNCOMMITTED INTERMEDIARY IF IT CAME TO A FIGHT BETWEEN BRITAIN AND ARGENTINA. AT THE END OF THE CONVERSATION, HE REPEATED WITH EMPHASIS THAT BRAZIL WANTED FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH BRITAIN AS WELL AS WITH ARGENTINA: WHAT WAS MORE, THEY NEEDED THEM.