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BRITISH EMBASSY

VIENNA

22 April 1982

Falkland Emergency Unit
F C O

Dear Unit

FALKLAND CRISIS : ARGENTINE PRESS CONFERENCE

1. The Argentine Ambassador here gave a press conference on 20 April for a group of press, radio and TV representatives in Vienna. Only about 10 journalists attended; no recordings or photographs were permitted. Our press contacts told us that the conference was a waste of time and a farce. The MFA have told us confidentially (they had sent a junior cadet along to take notes) that the ORF representative had left in disgust because there was no news value.
2. The press conference was not covered by Austrian radio or TV. Three daily newspapers carried short reports. It seems that the Ambassador gave a brief synopsis of the Argentine claim to the Falklands. He denied that there were any internal political or economic reasons for the invasion. A deciding factor had been "Britain's threat of making use of force". He was unimpressed by the UK's demands for self-determination for the Falkland Islanders because during the 1833 occupation of the Islands by the UK, the Argentine population had been driven out and "renewed" by British settlers. He rejected the accusation of aggression: Argentina had simply regained its own territory. The islands had a unique position in international law. He energetically denied rumours of cooperation between Argentina and the USSR over the UK fleet's movements. He hoped the IAEA would react to the UK sending nuclear-powered submarines to the area. He stressed Latin American solidarity and said that the Rio Treaty agreements would soon have to enter into force.
3. We do not think it necessary specifically to counter any of his statements. We have briefed and are continuing to brief local media representatives on the dispute and there is no sympathy for Argentina detectable in Austrian reporting.

Yours ever

A L Free-Gore
Head of Chancerycc: WED, FCO
SAmD, FCO