



55

10

15 March 1982

The Lord Moran KCMG  
OTTAWA

Aw 040/325/7		
RECORDED		
17 MAR 1982		
DESK OFFICER		
INDEX	PA	Action Taken

*Mr Smith Done*  
*You might copy 17/3*  
*to SED and*  
*suggest they pass*  
*a copy in confidence*  
*to Gibraltar.*  
*17/3* *CLB*

*Dear John,*

FALKLAND ISLANDS

1. Our dispute with Argentina on sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and the Falkland Islands Dependencies is again entering a difficult stage. If negotiations break down, we can expect Argentina to take the issue back to the United Nations. Our Guidance telno 37 of 3 April 1980 (copy enclosed) gave the background to the dispute. Recent developments are summarised below.

2. A further round of Anglo-Argentine talks on the Falkland Islands dispute was held in New York on 26/27 February. The meeting dealt mainly with an Argentine proposal on procedures to accelerate the rate of progress towards a solution of the dispute on their terms (ie a transfer of sovereignty to Argentina). Although the British delegation made clear their wish to end the dispute, they also made clear that we had no doubt about British sovereignty over the Islands and Dependencies and that, for the UK, the wishes of the Islanders were paramount. Mr Luce, who led the British delegation, undertook to consult his Ministerial colleagues on the Argentine proposal and report their response. The two Island Councillors who attended the talks undertook to do the same.

3. Although the meeting itself was cordial enough (copy of communique enclosed), subsequent Argentine actions have soured the atmosphere. Despite agreement at the talks that no details of the Argentine proposal should be revealed until both Governments had been consulted, the Argentine MFA released a statement on 1 March which gave details of their proposal and suggested that if it were not accepted Argentina would find other means of achieving her aim. This was accompanied by a revival of bellicose Argentine press comment attributed to government sources, threatening political and economic reprisals, as well as military action, to secure the Argentine claim. We have protested strongly at this and have reacted robustly in public. The scope for continuing negotiations on a basis acceptable to UK and Islander opinion has inevitably narrowed.






4. It is apparent that the Argentines are losing patience with the slow pace of negotiations; and it is unlikely that, even if we are able to continue the dialogue, negotiations can lead to an early settlement of this intractable dispute. As long as the Argentines insist on nothing less than the transfer to them of sovereignty over the disputed territories and the Islanders refuse to countenance any change in the status quo, the room to manoeuvre will be very small.

5. If negotiations break down, we have to expect that the Argentines will look to other means of putting pressure on the Islanders and us. There is a wide range of practical options open to them (from a withdrawal of the present services provided to the Islands to military action). But the Argentines will be certain to want to bring the dispute back before the UN at an early stage. The last UN General Assembly Resolution on the Falkland Islands was passed in 1976. I enclose a copy, together with a record of how countries voted. As you will see, without explicitly supporting the Argentine claim to sovereignty, the resolution was broadly pro-Argentine. It was passed by 102 votes to one against (the UK); 32 countries abstained. Since then the Falklands issue has remained on the agenda of the UN Committee of 24 and the Fourth Committee; but, since Anglo-Argentine negotiations have been continuing, no substantive discussions have taken place at the UN.

6. If the Argentines do refer the dispute to the UN again, we shall need to lobby actively for recognition of the Islanders' right to determine their own future. This line of argument has not hitherto been persuasive. Many countries know little of the Falklands dispute and do not wish to become involved. Others vote for the Argentine position because they wish to show solidarity with a fellow member of the Non-Aligned Movement. For some countries, the mere knowledge that the Falklands are a colony, and wish to remain a colony, is enough to sway their vote. We were outvoted overwhelmingly in 1976 and we cannot rate highly the prospects of achieving a significantly better voting outcome on a future resolution.

7. There are, however, factors which could lead to a weakening of international support for Argentina on this issue. First, following the successful decolonisation of Zimbabwe and Belize, the UK is less of a target for accusations of demonstrating a colonial mentality. Second, the Argentines themselves, following the 1976 coup, have earned a bad reputation for their human rights record under a repressive military government. Even countries which are inclined to see the dispute as a colonial hangover might think twice about the transfer of territory from a country where the democratic process is the norm to a country renowned for its Government's "disregard for



basic civil liberties". Certain Commonwealth countries might also find the principle of the maintenance of the territorial status quo relevant to their own relations with their neighbours.

8. It would now be useful to gain an indication of the extent to which selected Commonwealth countries will be susceptible to these arguments. All Commonwealth countries have subscribed inter alia to the self-determination principle in the 1971 Declaration of Commonwealth Principles (copy enclosed): and the right to self-determination is at the heart of the Falklands issue. We might hope that Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean, with their own reservations towards the Spanish-speaking countries of the Latin American mainland, could be particularly open to persuasion. While we cannot be too optimistic about the chances of mustering active support at the UN, an increase in the abstentions would in itself be useful.

9. I enclose a copy of a concise background brief on the Falklands dispute and our position. While we would not wish you to raise this formally with the MFA at this stage, we would like you to find an opportunity to turn the conversation to the Falklands dispute in the course of other business. You may leave a copy of the brief with trusted contacts. We should like to know in due course how your approach is received. We can of course supply additional information if it is required but we have thought it best to confine the present brief to essentials.

*Yours truly*  
*John.*

J B Ure