

March 25, 1983

**Telegram No. BUE/101/1/82, K.F. Ernest, First
Secretary, Embassy of India, Buenos Aires, Falkland
Islands War**

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Summary:

Analysis after Argentina's defeat in the Falklands War.

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FROM: K.F. Ernest, First Secretary, Embassy of India, Buenos Aires

TO: Ministry of External Affairs

DATE: March 25, 1983

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...The humiliating defeat shook Argentina to the marrow of its bones and shattered it both politically and economically. Throughout the Malvinas crisis India's attitude was more or less even-handed. Our initial reaction against the use of force by Argentina was soon balanced by a categorical statement by Foreign Minister that sovereignty in regard to the Malvinas islands vested in Argentina...

...Distinct from the ethnic composition of other countries of Latin America, Argentina is almost entirely European and prides itself on being so. However, the betrayal by both USA and Europe during the Malvinas conflict has turned Argentina's eyes once again towards the developing world from where it has derived the bulk of its support on the Malvinas issue. After participating in the Non-Aligned Movement as Observer since 1964, Argentina became a full member in 1973 during the days of Peron. In recent years, however, Argentina has been taking a back seat in the movement due to its occidental orientation. The Malvinas experience has jolted it now into a novel attitude. The realization has dawned on it that its Western relationships cannot be entirely relied upon and a diversification of its political and economic ties is necessary. In the aftermath of the Malvinas conflict, Argentina has felt quite inspired by the Indian example of maintaining an equilibrium in relations with all the countries of the world including the two superpowers. It has also deeply admired the fact that India, the largest member of the Commonwealth, was able to maintain its own against British pressures on the Malvinas issue despite the fact that its political, commercial and cultural ties with Argentina have at best been fragile and do not compare at all with links with Britain. Therefore, when the word came about India hosting the 7th Non-Aligned Movement summit, Argentina was one of the first countries to state that its delegation will be led by its President. No Argentine president had attended a non-aligned summit before...

...Argentina's surprise military occupation of Malvinas islands on April 2 came at the end of 17 long years of patient but infructuous bilateral negotiations with Britain. The central dispute has been over the question of sovereignty over the three archipelagos. Argentine proposal for a lasting solution had been eminently reasonable, but ignored by Great Britain. In July 1981, a comprehensive Argentine proposal included a commitment by Argentina to respect the interest of the islanders, their life style and traditions and Argentine willingness to let the UN provide a guarantee to ensure fulfillment of the Argentine commitment; Argentina was also willing to arrive at a practical formula for exploitation of economic resources of the islands jointly with Britain. In February 1982 Argentina proposed regular monthly meetings to speed up the process of negotiation which was also ignored by Britain. The March 19 incident on South Georgia islands when an Argentine civilian salvage team working on dismantling a whaling factory was threatened with forcible eviction and reports of British dispatch of a nuclear submarine to the zone precipitated Argentina's determination to regain sovereignty into the military action of April 2...

...As to whether Argentine military government expected to get away with its occupation of the islands, the military leaders seemed to have labored under a miscalculation that negotiations would ensue after the fait accompli and that US would restrain Britain from taking drastic steps, and that if need be Argentine troops could be withdrawn to make negotiations resume in earnest. However, the British dispatch of a formidable fleet and its relentless course to the conflict zone left Argentina without an honorable way out. Had Britain desisted from sending the fleet or even suspended its advance, Argentina would have been willing to comply with resolution 502 of Security Council, viz., to withdraw their troops from the islands.

Once the fleet reached the zone of conflict, British objective was nothing short of actual reoccupation of the islands and Argentine military debacle was a foregone conclusion. Argentina attributed her defeat to British overwhelming superiority in military forces, advanced technology and the US support.