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The Falklands crisis

Swiss represent British interests in Argentina

SWITZERLAND was quick to agree to a British government request that it look after Britain's interests in Argentina until further notice (reports Colin Farmer from Berne).

The request from London followed the decision by Britain to break off diplomatic relations with Argentina over the Falkland Islands crisis. Senior Swiss Foreign Ministry official Edward Brunner said: "We immediately agreed to the request and our embassy in Buenos Aires is now looking after Britain's quite considerable interests in Argentina to the best of its ability."

But the Foreign Ministry said the Swiss government's agreement to the British request did not imply Swiss mediation in the conflict. Mr Brunner said the Swiss role would be to "keep open the channels of communication" between the two sides.

He said the Swiss government would maintain this role even in the event of open hostilities between Britain and Argentina.

Switzerland now represents 18 other countries in crisis or conflict situations – and for the past 20 years has been representing British interests in Guatemala.

The Falkland Islands crisis has received extensive coverage in the Swiss media. We present here a round-up of Swiss press comment:

Die Ostschweiz

Britain may have no other choice than to accept the annexation of the Falkland Islands by Argentina. As deplorable as the act of force is, the fact remains incomprehensible that for a long time no efforts were made to find and carry out a peaceful, reasonable solution. After all, Britain and Spain are willing to negotiate over Gibraltar.

Neue Zürcher Zeitung

The conquest is intended to divert the Argentine people away

from the economic difficulties of the military junta and arouse the people's nationalistic feelings.

Bündner Zeitung

It's just a pure case of prestige. Because Argentina has not ventured to wage war or compromise with Chile over the Beagle Channel dispute, the Argentinians feel compelled to demonstrate their determination on perhaps a less risky affair. And they obviously consider the former world power Great Britain as less of a threat than their Latin American neighbour.

24heures

Argentina has just committed a morally inexcusable act.

JOURNAL DE GENÈVE

The British reluctance to give up this territory can be explained in two ways. Firstly, the opposition Labour Party would hardly be likely to approve if the Thatcher government were to make concessions to a "regime of torturers", as the Labour Party has described the government of Argentina. Secondly, the Conservative Party itself would hardly be ready to sacrifice even the slightest portion of the Empire.

La Suisse

It's hard to imagine that Argentina will give in to international censure and withdraw its

forces. All the more since the junta in Buenos Aires can count on the support of several South American states and doubtless that of the Soviet Union.

Der Bund

For decades, decolonisation

was equated with independence and the self determination of the people. But now Britain is faced with the problem that it can't legally relinquish its last colonies – because its inhabitants prefer to live under the British crown rather than under the rule of a state in whose geographical sphere the colony rather belongs.

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