

BBC NEWS WORLD SERVICE AT 4.00 P.M. ON FRIDAY 2 APRIL 1982

The Argentine Government says that its armed forces has invaded the British administered Falkland Islands but as we go on the air there is still some confusion about the situation. Just over an hour ago a British Government Minister told the House of Commons that he was unable to confirm that an Argentine invasion of the Falkland had in fact begun. So for the Argentine version of events here is ^{our} Latin America correspondent Harold Briley reporting over the line from the capital Buenos Aires.

The advance assault force of marines landed just after midnight from a large fleet of ships in position off the windswept island. They went ashore to capture key targets, the airport, the barracks of about 80 British marines and the tiny capital of Port Stanley, population 800. With beachhead secured more Argentine troops arrived by helicopter, landing craft and transport planes flying from the mainland. Argentina says all objectives were successfully accomplished. The ruling military junta said the Malvenas, Argentina's name for the Falklands and its dependencies of South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, had been recovered. The Foreign Minister said Argentina had taken this action because Britain had left it no alternative. There was no word whether the British marines or civilian population of 1800 British people offered resistance. One report says not. Britain's colonial governor, Mr. Rex Hunt, was reported to have requested talks with the occupying forces. The army's operational chief of staff, General Benjamin Memendez, was named as Argentina's military governor. Almost the entire Argentine fleet led by the navy's flagship and aircraft carrier with 1500 troops on board had sailed from the navy's main base of Puerto Belgano some days ago. The lone British navy vessel in the area, the ice patrol ship HMS ENDURANCE was patrolling off the dependency of South Georgia a thousand miles to the south east, shadowed by Argentine warships. President Galtieri called an emergency Cabinet meeting and promised a nationwide broadcast. Some provincial towns were reported to be festooned with flags as Argentina celebrated its reoccupation of the Islands after nearly 150 years in which it has

claimed sovereignty, inherited the Argentines say, from Spain. In Buenos Aires itself there was not much outward sign of rejoicing though some buildings flew Argentina's blue and white national flag. Newspapers splashed the story with banner headlines. People were interviewed on the streets by radio stations. I found mixed opinions. There was a general welcome for reoccupation of what Argentines regard as their territory. Many people told me they hoped there would be no bloodshed. Some Argentines said the invasion had been launched to divert discontent at home and criticism of the military government unpopular for its economic austerity programme, its prolonged rule and past human rights violations.

That was Harold Briley on the line from Buenos Aires. In London Parliament has heard statements on the situation in the Falklands and is ready to sit tomorrow, Saturday, if there are further developments. But, as our political correspondent Jeff Robertson points out, there is still no confirmation in London that the Falklands has been invaded.

The atmosphere in the House of Commons was very grave as the Deputy Foreign Minister informed MPs that an invasion by Argentine forces was expected very shortly.

"Over the past 24 hours the situation has become increasingly grave. There is now a real expectation that an Argentine attack against the Falkland Islands will take place very soon."

And, after acquainting MPs about the moves in the United Nations Security Council, Mr. Atkins went on:

"We are taking appropriate military and diplomatic measures to sustain our rights under international law and in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Charter. The House will not expect me to give details at this stage of the military steps we have taken to respond to the worsening situation."

Britain, he said, continued to hope that the Argentine Government would reconsider its rejection of diplomatic channels as a means for settling the dispute. For Labour, Mr. John Silkin pledged the Opposition's full support for the right of the people of the Falklands to stay British, as they wanted to do. It was Britain's duty to defend them. But, he said, wasn't it a fact that whenever the tinpot fascist junta in Argentina was in trouble at home it threatened the Falklands. And weren't the signs there to be seen some time ago. For the Social Democrats, Dr. David Owen, also pledged his Party's support for the Government. The Prime Minister Mrs Thatcher is staying in London for the time being and the House of Commons is prepared to sit in the morning on Saturday if there are any developments. A short time ago Government sources in London were saying that there had still been no confirmation from the Falklands of any invasion. But it wasn't at all clear whether there had been any further communication with the Falklands Governor since this morning or whether there perhaps had been some difficulty in radio links with the Island.

Jeff Robertson.

It's often been pointed out that Argentina's claims to the Falkland Islands are not so much based on what they are but what they might be. In other words that they could have off-shore oil and other riches within their territorial limits. The Islands themselves are bleak, rocky outcrops devoted to sheep farming. One of our correspondents, Derek Wilson, has visited them and tells us in this despatch what they are like:

"The Falklands are a cluster of islands more than 400 miles off the coast of Argentina, made up of two large islands and numerous smaller ones. Some of the islands are inhabited by just 2 or 3 people, others are smothered by penguins and brown seals, but most of the population of just under 2,000 live in the tiny capital, Port Stanley, set on a steep hillside overlooking an inlet. Their

homes are of timber with tin roofs. Outside Stanley there are no roads and the only regular link between the islands is provided by small seaplanes, beaver aircraft fitted with floats. Their only regular link with the outside world was a weekly plane to the Argentine coastal town of Comodoro Rivadavia. The islands are treeless, bleak and windy. One moment the sun is shining, the next it's hailstones. The islanders themselves are nearly all descendents of British settlers who went there 3 or 4 generations ago. Their accents range from cockney to Glaswegian and they are pro-British to a man. In fact they tell you, "we're more British than the British". Their main occupation is sheep farming but for several years now they have felt themselves to be an embarrassment to the British Government, nursing deep suspicions about London's intentions. Argentina's claim to the Islands is partly based on the argument she inherited them from Spain, which, however, abandoned the Islands long before a British sloop with marines on board reoccupied them in 1833."

That was Derek Wilson and now from