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A Swiss-eye-view of the Falklands dispute

SWITZERLAND has emphasised its "strict neutrality" in the Falkland Islands conflict, even though it now represents British interests in Argentina.

A government spokesman said after a cabinet meeting in Berne that in accordance with Switzerland's traditional policy of neutrality, the country would take no part in any sanctions and would not endeavour to take advantage of any such measures imposed by other nations.

The spokesman said the Swiss government supported a peaceful solution to the dispute.

Switzerland agreed to a British government request that it look after Britain's interests in Argentina following the breaking off of diplomatic relations between Britain and Argentina two months ago.

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THE Swiss government may soon halt the export of "war" materials to Britain and Argentina. A spokesman said a ban was being considered under a law which forbids such sales to countries at war or to crisis areas.

He said ammunitions exports to both countries last year were "extremely low" and totalled about Sfr. 3.5 million (about £1 million) – less than one per cent of all Swiss armaments sales worldwide.

Argentina, he said, had last year purchased a quantity of explosives intended chiefly for civilian use in mining and other industries. Swiss sales to Britain had comprised "ammunition parts."

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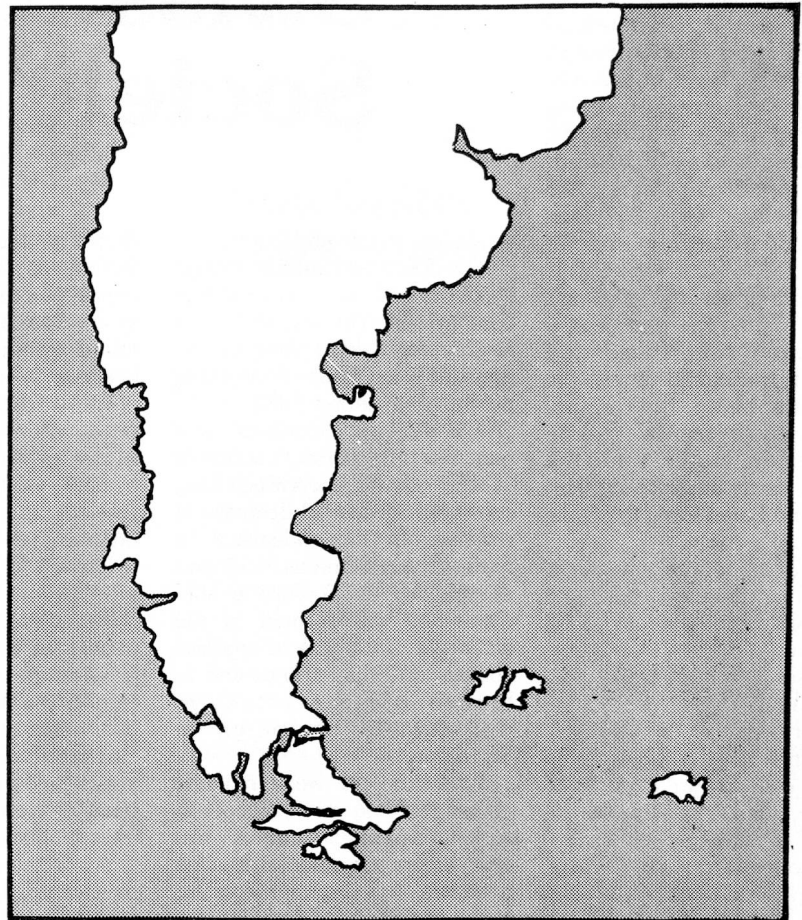
MAJOR Swiss banks have denied reports that wealthy Argentines are transferring vast amounts of capital from the United States to Switzerland. The reports, from Buenos Aires, appeared in some Swiss newspapers last month.

They claimed that Argentines with money in the United States transferred "hundreds of millions of dollars" to Swiss banks in fear that their US assets may be frozen.

One newspaper even reported that Swiss banks were unable to handle all the money, and in turn moved a lot of the alleged funds to banks in Luxembourg and the Bahamas.

"We have not as yet seen any of the funds held in the United States by Argentine nationals," the spokesman at one of the "big three" Swiss banks said.

"It also seems to us extremely unlikely that the US government would freeze such assets," he added.



NEWS that the Engadine was joining in the Falklands conflict did not mean that this picturesque region of the Grisons had broken away from the Federal Council's policy of strict neutrality.

This Engadine is a Royal Fleet Auxiliary. Completed in 1967 and weighing 6,500 tons, it has a hangar which can house up to six helicopters.

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AS fighting erupted last month between British and Argentinian forces, Swiss newspapers continued their extensive coverage of the Falkland Islands conflict. Here are some of the latest editorial comments from the Swiss Press:

LA SUISSE

WHAT should be a bad dream, in fact, is sad reality. In this year of 1982, two supposedly highly civilised countries have engaged each other in the biggest naval battle of recent history. And the reasons for this open conflict have been given as the honour of the nation – words which often disguise extremely sordid considerations.

BASLER ZEITUNG

THE conflict, which began as an operetta, is on the point of ending as a bloody tragedy and developing from a strictly local

framework into a total American and possibly even geo-political dimension.

Yet however tragic and absurd war over the desolate islands may be, the question of legitimate claim to sovereignty of the Falklands may be just as unclear.

But there can be no doubt as to the right of the British to repel the military aggression and flagrant violation of international law of Argentine dictator General Galtieri.

24 HEURES

INCREASED chauvinism, nationalism and the inability of political leaders and diplomats to find a common language have immediately resulted in senseless aggression.

DER BUND

A "VICTORY" in the Falklands war is not worth the sacrifice which it makes necessary – neither to human lives nor to broken political ideals.

It is not worth the animosity between two nations who beforehand had close ties.

And it is not worth the global political developments which are not to be ruled out.

TRIBUNE DE GENEVE

OF course, the Soviet Union and its loyal ally, Cuba, will try to claim any chestnuts from this fire that they can find. With the present international situation in mind, we really could have done without this conflict.