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MEETING OF INFORMATION GROUP ON THE FALKLANDS

10 AM WEDNESDAY 28 APRIL 1982

Present:

B Ingham - No 10
J Groves - Director General, COI
N Fenn - FCO
D Colvin - Cabinet Office
S Fuller - Presentation Unit
R Hatfield - Presentation Unit
J Gee - MoD
B Mower - No 10 (for part of meeting)

The meeting identified two potential major announcements by MoD that morning, subject to decisions elsewhere:

- Total Exclusion Zone (TEZ);
- Death of member of Argentine forces on South Georgia.

The announcement about the TEZ from noon, Friday, April 30, though widely predicted, would be useful in lowering expectations of impending military action. Concern was expressed about the questions that might flow from the reported death of the member of the Argentine forces and the need for careful handling.

The meeting discussed the latest stage of the Haig shuffle. It was recorded that the line to be deployed by press officers would be:

"The American Government put their formal proposals to the Argentine Government yesterday. They have now given us the text. The proposals are under consideration."

It was recognised that this would raise many questions and that press offices faced a very difficult period before, it was hoped, the Argentine Government gave its reaction to the proposals.

The meeting considered the apparent breakdown in party unity in Parliament. The Chairman reported that he would be taking the following line:

1. The opposition will know if unity has broken down; the press must ask them; but of course some members of the Opposition had been opposed all along to the Task Force.
2. It must be a matter for speculation why Mr Foot had chosen to bale out politically at this time.
3. Doubt whether the country will understand it, except in terms of the well known and well advertised problem of the Opposition.
4. But Government should not embark upon the recovery of the Falklands relying on Opposition support; that would be - and has been - a bonus. But if it does not continue - too bad. The Government is responsible; will not shun^{ts} responsibilities; and will do what is necessary.

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Other topics considered were:


- the attitude of the leader of the Liberal Party;
- the Pope's letter to the Queen;
- the OAS meeting;
- the possibility of moves in the UN; and
- the inquiry about Israeli supply of arms to the Argentine.

The SAPU was invited to prepare a note on UN Trusteeship.

The FCO undertook to consider whether to field the Foreign Secretary for Thames TV Eye. (It was later reported that Thames TV Eye had withdrawn its request).

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be at 10.00am on Thursday 29 April 1982.


B. INGHAM
28 April 1982