

CONFIDENTIAL

MEETING OF INFORMATION GROUP ON THE FALKLANDS

10 AM WEDNESDAY 12 MAY 1982

Present:

B Ingham - No 10
P Brazier - COI
N Fenn - FCO
C Worrall - MoD
D Colvin - Cabinet Office
R Hatfield - Presentation Unit
S Fuller - Presentation Unit
B Mower - No 10.



Military

The Chairman reported that he had spoken to the Prime Minister today on three issues:

- (i) the importance of getting film from Ascension here as fast as possible, partly to offset current Press criticism on this score. The Prime Minister was aware of the criticism but also of the difficulties in ships being incommunicado whilst transmitting pictures;
- (ii) that we should ensure that we, not the Argentines, were the first to distribute pictures of prisoners from South Georgia;
- (iii) that we must come out first with an authoritative account of the death on South Georgia.

MoD said that film, believed to include the South Georgia landing and Argentine prisoners, was arriving at 14.10 this afternoon at Brize Norton and we expected to have it available some time this evening. The Group agreed that MoD should ensure that this goes to as many sources as possible - ITN, Americans and COI - whatever may be the proprietorial rights involved.

The Secretary of State was going with the Chief of General Staff to be present at the traditional send-off of the QEII today. There was also a Press facility today at Millhill to show them arrangements for speeding up mail to the Task Force. PA expected to have further material available today on action near Ascension Island.

Diplomatic

FCO said we were reaching a very difficult position in that the Argentine formula would appear to accept, unambiguously, our major requirements on withdrawal and no pre-judging. Our tactic, as this emerged, should be to associate the small print of the agreement with the major issues, for example, whether heavy Argentine presence in the interim administration would de facto pre-judge the final negotiations.

Parsons was recommending a possible trade off involving our including South Georgia and South Sandwich in the negotiations in return for satisfactory interim arrangements. Parsons telegram 727 provides the present attributable line. After some discussions it was agreed that our unattributable position should be that we are probing and testing out the real intentions of the Argentines which are revealed in the detail - continuing to throw doubt on the Junta's real intentions as expressed in various statements outside New York.

Mr Pym intended in future to make brief comments to the Press each day when there were no major developments. Today he intended to say something along the lines:

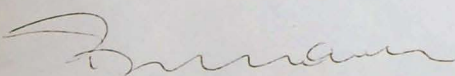
- (i) we are continuing to work with maximum intensity at the United Nations;
- (ii) (following Parsons' statement) there had been some development overnight which on the face of it held promise for progress;
- (iii) but there are a host of difficult and detailed problems remaining and it is impossible to predict the outcome.

There will be a House of Commons debate on Thursday and it is expected that Mr Pym and Mr Nott will open and close respectively.

On the question of the Pope's visit, we shall say this is entirely a matter for the Vatican.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Group will take place on Thursday, 13 May 1982 at 10 am.


BRIAN MOWER
12 May 1982