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PRIME MINISTER

YOUR VISIT TO THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

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Is it possible for
the celebrations to
be extended beyond
Feb 26 - 28 - 29
to the 27th - 28th - 29th
with the help
of the
military
and
the
RAF?

As you know, the Institute of Directors are hoping that you will address them on 23 February (and Walter Goldsmith has written a strong letter urging that you keep this date). The celebrations in the Falkland Islands of the 150th Anniversary are from 20 - 26 February on present plans.

Providing all the difficulties (see below) can be solved, you could just about give your speech to the Institute, take off immediately afterwards, fly to Ascension by VC10 (11 hours), rest for a few hours and then proceed by Nimrod to Port Stanley (9 hours). You would then be able to attend the end of the celebrations on 25 and 26 February.

In theory you could alternatively attend the beginning of the celebrations and return for your speech on 23 February. But in practice things could well go wrong. Bad weather or bad luck could well mean that you missed your date with the Institute on 23 February.

Would you like us to tell Walter Goldsmith in answer to his letter that you will keep your engagement with him?

Yes
no

Can we also tell Rex Hunt that you are more likely to come at the end of than at the beginning of the celebrations?

Yes
no

The difficulties that still have to be resolved are as follows:-

(a) When the extension to the runway has been completed (in the next couple of weeks or so) Nimrod trials will begin. The MOD say that we shall not know until mid-December whether the trials have been successful and Nimrod can land safely, though they are fairly optimistic. If the trials fail, we shall be able to use Hercules though this would be slow (12 hours from Ascension to Port Stanley) and uncomfortable.

(b) The Nimrod would need inflight re-fuelling. Certain risks are involved in this operation though the probability of anything going wrong is very low. The operation could, however, be uncomfortable for passengers since the Nimrod has to dive during re-fuelling.

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(c) At present 1 in 4 Hercules flights is unable to land and has to return to Ascension. Nimrod is expected to do better than this and February should be better than October. But we shall have to wait to see.

(d) We shall have to consider whether the Argentine Government, or more probably an unauthorised Argentine officer, is likely to attempt any action against the Falkland Islands while you are there. We cannot make that assessment now.

I am sure that all these problems can be surmounted. But I think there is good reason for not making public now a firm decision to go to the Falkland Islands. (With your agreement I have told Rex Hunt and Bernard Ingham that a final decision cannot be taken until the logistics have been worked out).

A.J.C.

5 October, 1982

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