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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

16 December 1982

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 9 December with which you enclosed a telex sent to you by Mr. Milne, your Manager in Port Stanley, in which he expressed concern at the decision that Mrs. Thorne and her family should not visit her husband over the Christmas period.

The Prime Minister has noted the views expressed by Mr. Milne and in particular that Major General Thorne is held in such high esteem in the Falkland Islands. It is entirely in keeping with his character as a professional soldier that, even though it must have been a great disappointment to all concerned, he has accepted the decision and regards the matter as closed.

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your extremely kind offer of meeting the cost of the air fare to enable the visit to go ahead. The fact is, however, that the visit was not cancelled on grounds of cost. There are difficulties in transport and accommodation which make it impossible at present to offer visits to the garrison on a wider basis, and Ministers felt for a number of reasons that now was not the time to allow a single visit of this nature to go ahead.

The Prime Minister was grateful to you and Mr. Milne for writing as you did.

A. J. COLES

C.E. Needham, Esq.

B



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE  
MAIN BUILDING WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB  
Telephone 01-218 6169 (Direct Dialling)  
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D/S of S/PS/10(E48/10)

16th December 1982

*Dear Tom,*

*Type letter pl.*

*AR 12/12.*

/ As you asked in your letter of 10th December to Richard Mottram I enclose a draft reply for you to send to Mr Needham, Chairman of the Coalite Group, offering to pay the air fare for General Thorne's family to visit the Falkland Islands over Christmas.

*Yours ever*

*Henry Piper*

(D T PIPER)

A J Coles Esq

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your letter of 9th December with which you enclosed a telex sent to you by Mr Milne, your Manager in Port Stanley, in which he expressed concern at the decision that Mrs Thorne and her family should not visit her husband, over the Christmas period.

The Prime Minister has noted the views expressed by Mr Milne and ~~has commented that it is heartening to learn~~ <sup>in particular</sup> that Major General Thorne is held in such high esteem in the Falkland Islands. It is entirely in keeping with his character as a professional soldier that, even though it must have been a great disappointment to all concerned, he has accepted the decision and regards the matter as closed.

The Prime Minister has asked me to thank you for your extremely kind offer of meeting the cost of the air fare to enable the visit to go ahead. The fact is, however, that the visit was not cancelled on grounds of costs. There are difficulties in transport and accommodation which make it impossible at present to offer visits to the garrison on a wider basis, and Ministers felt for a number of reasons that now was not the time to allow a single visit of this nature to go ahead.

The Prime Minister was grateful to you and Mr Milne for writing as you did.

16 DEC 1982

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

*Mr. Needham's letter  
has arrived and I have  
written to the ro. d.*

10 December, 1982

*A-F-C-<sup>10.</sup>/<sub>12</sub>*

*Dear John,*

*h-u.*

Falkland Islands Military Commissioner: Visit by Family at  
Christmas

The Chairman of Coalite, (the parent company of the Falkland Islands Company), Mr Ted Needham, has rung Mr Onslow in a state of some excitement about the decision to cancel the arrangements for the Military Commissioner's family to join him in the Falkland Islands for Christmas.

The incident has (according to Mr Needham) created a furore in the Islands. He read out a telegram from the recently retired local director of the Falkland Islands Company in Port Stanley, expressing the Islanders' admiration for General Thorne and their 'disgust' at the way he had been treated. As the Commanding Officer, on a far longer tour than any of his accompanying officers or men, the Islanders thought it entirely appropriate that his family should join him at Christmas-time and were determined to pursue the case even though General Thorne himself had made it clear he was not. Mr Needham ended by saying that he would be writing to the Prime Minister about this.

Mr Onslow took note, but made it clear that this was entirely a matter for the MOD and not one on which he could make any comment.

You will wish to be aware that a letter from Mr Needham may be on its way. In view of the central MOD interest, I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram.

*Yours ever*

*John Holmes*

(J E Holmes)  
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq  
Private Secretary  
10 Downing Street

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Coalite Group PLC

PERSONAL

*deember*  
9th ~~November~~, 1982

The Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher, M.P.,  
Prime Minister,  
10 Downing Street,  
London SW1.

*Dear Prime Minister*

FALKLAND ISLANDS

As you suggested, I have been keeping in touch with Cranley Onslow on the Shackleton proposals and other developments on the Islands. I like to think we have been mutually helpful. The balance in Francis Pym's statement yesterday seemed to me admirable.

The main purpose of writing to you, however, is to pass you the attached copy of a telex from Harry Milne in Stanley, the Manager with whom I was in telex contact during the early stages of Argentinian occupation. He is retired now and not regularly in touch, so there must be a lot of feeling on the subject he writes about for him to contact me and ask that I raise it with you.

I had the pleasure of getting to know David Thorne during my recent visit to the Islands and it was clear that he was well liked and respected for all that he had done, not least in respect of the marvellous relationships existing between civil and military personnel.

I did not see the News of the World article but did hear a radio broadcast in which David Thorne was having to explain why it had been proposed his family would join him at Christmas, half way through his twelve months stint. As a good soldier, he obviously has indicated that he accepts the decision and the matter is closed. It seems to me that it should perhaps not be left there.

I can see the problems from the M.O.D. point of view and wonder whether it might help if we offer, anonymously, to pay the fares of General Thorne's family, for which the flights could of course only be arranged by M.O.D. authority.

With best wishes

*James Sincerely*  
*C. E. Needham*

C. E. Needham

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216 FALKISCO FK

54250 COALTE G  
216 FALKISCO FK

9TH DECEMBER 1982

TO: C E NEEDHAM  
FR: H M MILNE

DEAR TED,

THE ARTICLE IN THE NEWS OF THE WORLD AND THE SUBSEQUENT REFUSAL BY M.C.D. TO ALLOW GENERAL THORNE'S WIFE AND FAMILY TO JOIN HIM AT CHRISTMAS HAS CAUSED CONSIDERABLE ILL FEELING IN STANLEY BOTH WITH TROOPS AND CIVILIANS.

GENERAL THORNE SAYS THAT THE MATTER IS CLOSED, BUT THAT ONLY APPLIES TO THE TROOPS. BOTH CIVILIAN AND MILITARY ARE DISGUSTED AND ANGERED BY THE ACTIONS OF M.C.D. IN PAMPERING TO THE ILL-INFORMED, SPITEFUL AND BACK-BITING PUEBISH PUBLISHED IN A RAG SUCH AS THE NEWS OF THE WORLD.

ON CHRISTMAS DAY THE GENERAL STARTS AT 07.30 HRS AND WILL BE WITH HIS TROOPS UNTIL 23.00 HRS. HE IS ADMIRER AND EXTREMELY WELL LIKED BY BOTH CIVILIANS AND MILITARY WHO CONSIDER HIM A VERY HARDWORKING MAN WHO KEEPS IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH ALL RANKS.

A MAN WITH HIS DRIVE, PERSONALITY AND WHO IS SERVING OUT HERE FOR 12 MONTHS COMPARED TO THE 4 - 6 MONTHS SERVED BY HIS OFFICERS AND MEN SURELY DESERVES SOME LITTLE CONSIDERATION. A SHORT VISIT BY HIS WIFE AND FAMILY AT CHRISTMAS IS LITTLE ENOUGH COMPENSATION. THE COST IS VERY SMALL COMPARED WITH THE VAST SUMS WHICH ARE BEING SPENT ON OTHER LESS WORTHY CAUSES.

CAN YOU PLEASE CONTACT SOME OF YOUR FRIENDS IN HIGH OFFICE, IF POSSIBLE MRS. THATCHER, AND LET THEM ALL KNOW OF OUR ANGER AND DISGUST AT THEIR TREATMENT OF AN OFFICER WE ALL HOLD IN HIGH ESTEEM. THEIR ACTION IN THIS INSTANCE CAN ONLY HARM THE WONDERFUL IMAGE CREATED BY THEIR ACTIONS REGARDING THE FALKLAND ISLANDS CAMPAIGN.

MANY THANKS,

HARRY.

PLS HAVE U RECD THIS CK+?

54250 COALTE G

YES WE HAVE RECD CK THANK YOU

216 FALKISCO FKTA BETTY EILI - MARIE AND ROSIE.

54250 COALTE G  
216 FALKISCO FK

Argentina HU

CF - BU



10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

10 December 1982

I enclose a copy of a letter which the Prime Minister has received from Mr. C.E. Needham, Chairman of the Coalite Group. He refers to a telex received from his Manager in Stanley protesting about the fact that the Military Commissioner will not be joined by his family for Christmas. You will see that Mr. Needham asks whether his firm can, anonymously, pay the fares of General Thorne's family.

Bi  
10/12

I should be grateful for a draft reply for my signature on behalf of the Prime Minister as soon as possible.

A. J. COLES

Richard Mottram, Esq.,  
Ministry of Defence.



FROM THE CHAIRMAN



**Coalite Group PLC**

24th December, 1982

Mr. John Coles,  
Private Secretary,  
10 Downing Street,  
London WC1.

A.S.C. 3  
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*Dear John*

Thank you for your reply of 16th December on behalf of the Prime Minister.

I appreciated that the decision must have been made on considerations other than cost but made the offer in case it would ease changing that decision if considered appropriate. It was a great pity that David and Mrs. Thorne had to suffer such embarrassment.

I can understand the dilemma and, having raised the subject as I thought I should, am grateful to the Prime Minister for the re-consideration it was given.

*Yours sincerely*  
*C. E. Needham*

C. E. Needham

*Best Wishes for 1983*