

MR. COLESFUTURE OF THE FALKLANDS

I think that we must give early consideration to how we deal with the growing public debate about the future of the Falklands, particularly the question of "internationalisation". I sent a note to the Prime Minister about this a few weeks ago and we discussed it in the context of the Franks Report debate. Fresh urgency has been given to the question by the visit to the Falklands of the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee. In the Daily Telegraph of 9 February (page 5) Tony Kershaw is reported as saying in Port Stanley that <sup>the</sup> Falklanders are prepared to discuss sharing responsibilities for the Islands with other nations or organisations. He dismisses any arrangement which has the object of transferring sovereignty to Argentina, but he talks about "the various possibilities, the United Nations, Commonwealth countries, certain states who are geographically more interested than others.....". He is reported as saying that a large percentage of Islanders wanted some form of discussion. The Committee allege that they have met 50% of the population.

The Committee returned to Britain overnight and gave a short Press Conference at Brize Norton. It is likely that they will start airing views in and out of Parliament before their report is submitted. I suspect that they may develop the following themes:-

i. The Government is stuck with a policy of "Fortress Falklands". The Government is arguing that a lot of time must pass before the question of the future can be addressed. The wounds must be allowed to heal, normal life must return to the Islands, etc etc. The Prime Minister returned from the Falklands assuring everyone that all the Islanders wanted to remain British for all time.

ii. The Committee on the other hand has carried out its own consultations with the Islanders and has discovered that the Government has got it wrong. The Islanders are perfectly ready to be consulted about their future and are much more open minded than the Government has given everyone to believe. The Islanders are interested

/in some kind of



in some kind of "internationalisation" provided that it does not end up by their being handed over to Argentina.

iii. Against this background, will the Government not give serious consideration to some of the "internationalisation" proposals which have been put forward, eg extension of the Antarctic Treaty Area to include the Falklands (Lord Kennet), internationalisation of the Falklands as a development or scientific, or wildlife area (Lord Stamp and others), the creation of a multilateral organisation to include leading Latin American countries, UN trusteeship and so on. Would it not be more fruitful for the Government to negotiate with Argentina towards some end of this kind, rather than maintain a sterile policy of standing pat on the status quo?

I think that the basically hostile approach which certain members of the Committee will be disposed to deploy will be accompanied by an intensification of the public debate about internationalisation which is coming from people of good will who accept that there can be no negotiation with Argentina about sovereignty and who are looking for an alternative to an indefinite period of trench warfare.

If this kind of challenge does develop, I suggest that the following points might be included in our response:-

i. Negotiations with Argentina

No question of this until the Argentines are prepared to declare a formal cessation of hostilities and normalise relations with Britain. Even then, we are not prepared to negotiate about sovereignty.

ii. Consultation with the Islanders

Of course we are not avoiding consultation with the Islanders until some set point in the future when we judge that normal life has returned. We are talking to them the whole time; a progressive process of consultation will continue; we obviously will not

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publicly reveal every conversation we have with them. For the moment, it is quite clear to us that the Islanders wish to remain British and are determined never to be handed over to Argentina.

iii. Internationalisation Ideas

We understand that a number of propositions have been put forward by individuals for the best motives. But it is far too early to consider any such propositions in detail. Meanwhile, their proponents should ask themselves the following questions. Would

① any such proposition be acceptable to the Islanders, ie would the Islanders consider that such and such an

② international solution would provide them with adequate protection against a surprise attack by a future Argentine Government? Would any such solution be acceptable to Argentina? If not, how could the Islands

③ consider themselves protected against a future attack? Would any such solution work in practice?

iv. Fortress Falklands

It is a gross error to describe this as a "policy". It is "a situation" forced on us for the time being by the Argentine aggression.

I know that the FCO is giving thought to all these questions and that they are awaiting a full report from Rex Hunt on the Parliamentary Committee visit.



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10 February 1983