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AMENDED DISTRIBUTION 14 FEBRUARY 1983
FROM PORT STANLEY 111210Z FEB 83

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 104 OF 11 FEBRUARY

YOUR TELNO PERSONAL 10

VISIT OF SELECT COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

1. THE COMMITTEE WERE HERE FROM 2 TO 7 FEBRUARY. THEY TOOK FORMAL EVIDENCE IN PUBLIC FOR TWO FULL DAYS. NONE OF THE INDIVIDUAL WITNESSES VOLUNTEERED BUT, WHEN APPROACHED, WILLINGLY AGREED TO APPEAR. THEY REPRESENTED A BROAD CROSS-SECTION OF THE COMMUNITY.

2. WITNESSES WERE WITHOUT EXCEPTION TOTALLY OPPOSED TO NEGOTIATIONS WITH ARGENTINA OVER SOVEREIGNTY, BUT CLOSE QUESTIONING BY MEMBERS OF BOTH POLITICAL PERSUASIONS BROUGHT INTO THE OPEN ASPECTS WHICH ISLANDERS PREVIOUSLY PREFERRED NOT TO THINK ABOUT. FOR EXAMPLE, WITNESSES WERE ASKED HOW LONG THEY THOUGHT UK COULD AFFORD TO SUPPORT A FORTRESS FALKLANDS POLICY, GIVEN

A) THE ECONOMIC PRESSURES IN A COUNTRY WITH OVER THREE MILLION UNEMPLOYED.,

B) THE DIFFICULTY IN MAINTAINING OUR DEFENCE COMMITMENT TO NATO ETC AND,

C) THE EFFECT THAT THE PRESENT SITUATION HAD ON OUR RELATIONS WITH SOUTH AMERICA AND, INDEED, MUCH OF THE REST OF THE WORLD.

3. THEY WERE INVITED TO CONSIDER WHETHER THE POSITION COULD BE INTERNATIONALISED BY SOME FORM OF CONDOMINIUM OVER THE ISLANDS, BY UN TRUSTEESHIP OR BY FORMING A SOUTH ATLANTIC ALLIANCE WITH SOUTH AMERICAN COUNTRIES. THESE SUGGESTIONS DID NOT APPEAL TO WITNESSES. MOST SAID THAT, IF THE ISLANDS WERE NOT TO REMAIN BRITISH, THEY WOULD PREFER TO LEAVE, AND WOULD EXPECT COMPENSATION OR RESETTLEMENT ELSEWHERE.

4. THE QUESTION OF THE ISLANDS CONSTITUTION WAS AIRED, AS WERE FUTURE LINKS WITH BRITAIN. MOST WITNESSES FAVOURED CLOSER LINKS, THOUGH THERE WERE ONE OR TWO WHO THOUGHT THAT INDEPENDENCE (WITH A DEFENCE GUARANTEE FROM BRITAIN) MIGHT PROVIDE A MORE SECURE FUTURE.

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5. THE PUBLIC PROCEEDINGS WERE BROADCAST IN FULL BY THE LOCAL RADIO STATION AT PEAK TIMES OVER SIX EVENINGS AND WERE WIDELY LISTENED TO AND DISCUSSED. IT IS AS YET TOO EARLY TO SAY WHAT LASTING EFFECT THE VISIT MAY HAVE ON PUBLIC OPINION BUT, AS ALREADY INDICATED, IT HAS STIMULATED DISCUSSION ABOUT THE ISLANDS' FUTURE AND, AFTER THE EUPHORIA GENERATED BY THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT, IT HAS BROUGHT ISLANDERS TO EARTH WITH A BUMP.

6. THE THEME OF THE PUBLIC PROCEEDINGS WAS CONTINUED IN PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS WITH ISLANDERS BOTH IN STANLEY AND IN THE VISITS TO CAMP. THE COMMITTEE SPLIT INTO FOUR GROUPS AND VISITED 22 CAMP SETTLEMENTS OVER THE WEEKEND. THEY CONSEQUENTLY COLLECTIVELY COVERED A LARGE PART OF THE COLONY AND SPOKE TO A GOOD PROPORTION OF THE ADULT POPULATION.

7. THE MEMBERS THOUGHT THE VISIT HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL AND WERE COMPLIMENTARY ABOUT THE PROGRAMME AND ARRANGEMENTS MADE FOR THEM. IT WAS UNFORTUNATE THAT MR CANAVAN'S HEATED DISCUSSION WITH MONSIGNOR SPRAGGON (AND HAROLD ROWLANDS, FINANCIAL SECRETARY) AT THE WELCOMING COCKTAIL PARTY IN GOVERNMENT HOUSE WAS REPORTED TO THE TELEGRAPH AND WAS SOMEWHAT EMBELLISHED AND EXAGGERATED IN THE TELLING.

8. MESSRS CANAVAN AND HOOLEY ARRIVED WITH PREJUDGMENTS MADE THAT NO EVIDENCE COULD ALTER., MESSRS FOULKES AND SPEARING HAD REFRESHINGLY OPEN MINDS ON THE SUBJECT AND MESSRS LESTER AND TOWNSEND SHOWED LITTLE SYMPATHY FOR THE ISLANDERS' POINT OF VIEW. BUT ALL MEMBERS DEPARTED WITH A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE BASIC PROBLEM OF FINDING ANY SOLUTION THAT WOULD SATISFY BOTH ISLANDERS AND ARGENTINES.

9. A COPY OF THE COMMITTEE'S PROGRAMME IS IN OUR BAG LEAVING TODAY.

HUNT

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AMENDED DISTRIBUTION 14 FEBRUARY 1983

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FROM PORT STANLEY 111818Z FEB 83

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 106 OF 11 FEBRUARY

YOUR TELNO PERSONAL 10 AND MY TELNO 104: VISIT OF SELECT
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

1. PARA 8 OF MY TUR. WILLIAMS, WHO ATTENDED ALL THE FASC
HEARINGS (I GAVE EVIDENCE BUT DID NOT SIT IN FOR OTHER
WITNESSES) FORMED A DIFFERENT IMPRESSION OF MESSRS LESTER AND
TOWNSEND. HE FOUND THEM SYMPATHETIC TO ISLANDERS WHOM THEY
INTERVIEWED. MY IMPRESSION WAS GAINED IN PRIVATE CONVER-
SATIONS BUT I MIGHT WELL HAVE BEEN WRONG.

HUNT



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