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cc MOD  
HMT

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

6 April 1983

Falklands: Visit of Argentine next-of-kin

We discussed this question on a number of occasions over the Easter weekend.

The Prime Minister reiterated to me this morning her view that, particularly given the attitude of the Falkland Islanders to this visit and the fact that Argentina has not agreed to a formal cessation of hostilities, we should stick firmly to the conditions which we have outlined to the ICRC. In particular, we should continue to insist that it is for the ICRC to organise the visit. With regard to the statement in paragraph 4 of FCO telegraph No. 83 of 31 March to UKMIS Geneva that we do not expect Destefanis to land, the Prime Minister has commented that under no circumstances could Destefanis land on the Falkland Islands.

WFE | You explained to me earlier the steps you had taken to ensure that UKMIS Geneva were aware of the Prime Minister's views. I should be grateful if, when the ICRC have commented further, you would provide advice on further action.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

A. J. COLES

Brian Fall, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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GRS 563  
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DESKBY 311600Z  
FM PCG 311500Z MAR 83  
TO IMMEDIATE URGTS GENEVA  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 083 OF 31 MARCH 1983  
AND TO IMMEDIATE PERSONAL FOR CIVIL COMMISSIONER PORT STANLEY,  
MONTVIDEO, PRIORITY WASHINGTON AND URGTS NEW YORK.

YOUR TELNO 134: FALKLANDS: ARGENTINE NEXT OF KIN.

1. PLEASE TELL THE ICRC THAT WE APPRECIATE THEIR CONCERN THAT WE SHOULD BE IN AGREEMENT ABOUT THE CONDITIONS BEFORE THEY ARE PUT TO SR DESTEPANIS. WE HOPE THEY WILL MAKE CLEAR TO EHM THAT WE ARE CONCERNED TO ESTABLISH THE DETAILS OF A VISIT WHICH WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE AND PRACTICABLE. IN STRESSING THAT OUR CONDITIONS ARE ENTIRELY GENUINE YOU SHOULD ALSO MAKE CLEAR TO THE RED CROSS THAT IF DESTEPANIS WERE TO SAIL FROM AN ARGENTINE PORT IN AN ARGENTINE VESSEL WITHOUT PRIOR AGREEMENT NO (REPEAT NO) VISIT TO THE CEMETERY COULD TAKE PLACE. WE LEAVE IT TO THE RED CROSS WHETHER OR NOT TO PASS THIS ON AT THIS STAGE.

2. AS FAR AS ORGANISATION IS CONCERNED, YOU SHOULD TELL THE ICRC THAT WE SEE THEIR ROLE AS ESSENTIALLY ONE OF ACTING AS A LINK BETWEEN US AND THE EXPEDITION. WE ARE ASKING THEM TO CONFIRM AND SUPERVISE ORGANISATION, BUT THEY WILL PRESUMABLY REQUIRE DESTEPANIS TO DO MUCH OF THE ORGANISATIONAL WORK, IE IN CHARTERING A VESSEL AND IN ASSEMBLING THE PARTY. WE ARE NOT DEALING WITH DESTEPANIS DIRECT NOR WITH THE ARGENTINE AUTHORITIES AND DO NOT INTEND TO DO SO. IT IS FOR DESTEPANIS TO ENABLE THE ICRC TO PRESENT US WITH A DETAILED PLAN WHICH WE CAN DISCUSS AND HOPEFULLY AGREE WITH THEM. YOU SHOULD REPEAT THAT WE ALSO EXPECT THEM IN DUE COURSE TO GIVE US AN ASSURANCE

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*This seems to  
refer to the  
points of the  
which is  
the statement  
that Destepanis  
sail with the  
expedition.  
I note it says  
"we would not  
expect him to  
land".  
Under no  
circumstances  
could he possibly  
land  
no*

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to Chequers  
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TO IMMEDIATE UKMIS GENEVA  
TELEGRAM NUMBER 083 OF 31 MARCH 1983  
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YOUR TELNO 134: FALKLANDS: ARGENTINE NEXT OF KIN.

1. PLEASE TELL THE ICRC THAT WE APPRECIATE THEIR CONCERN THAT WE SHOULD BE IN AGREEMENT ABOUT THE CONDITIONS BEFORE THEY ARE PUT TO SR DESTEFANIS. WE HOPE THEY WILL MAKE CLEAR TO HIM THAT WE ARE CONCERNED TO ESTABLISH THE DETAILS OF A VISIT WHICH WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE AND PRACTICABLE. IN STRESSING THAT OUR CONDITIONS ARE ENTIRELY GENUINE YOU SHOULD ALSO MAKE CLEAR TO THE RED CROSS THAT IF DESTEFANIS WERE TO SAIL FROM AN ARGENTINE PORT IN AN ARGENTINE VESSEL WITHOUT PRIOR AGREEMENT NO (REPEAT NO) VISIT TO THE CEMETERY COULD TAKE PLACE. WE LEAVE IT TO THE RED CROSS WHETHER OR NOT TO PASS THIS ON AT THIS STAGE.

2. AS FAR AS ORGANISATION IS CONCERNED, YOU SHOULD TELL THE ICRC THAT WE SEE THEIR ROLE AS ESSENTIALLY ONE OF ACTING AS A LINK BETWEEN US AND THE EXPEDITION. WE ARE ASKING THEM TO CONFIRM AND SUPERVISE ORGANISATION, BUT THEY WILL PRESUMABLY REQUIRE DESTEFANIS TO DO MUCH OF THE ORGANISATIONAL WORK, IE IN CHARTERING A VESSEL AND IN ASSEMBLING THE PARTY. WE ARE NOT DEALING WITH DESTEFANIS DIRECT NOR WITH THE ARGENTINE AUTHORITIES AND DO NOT INTEND TO DO SO. IT IS FOR DESTEFANIS TO ENABLE THE ICRC TO PRESENT US WITH A DETAILED PLAN WHICH WE CAN DISCUSS AND HOPEFULLY AGREE WITH THEM. YOU SHOULD REPEAT THAT WE ALSO EXPECT THEM IN DUE COURSE TO GIVE US AN ASSURANCE

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OF THEIR ENTIRE SATISFACTION THAT THE VISIT IS OF A HUMANITARIAN NATURE.

3. IT REMAINS OUR POSITION THAT WE ARE NOT ABLE TO ACCEPT AN ARGENTINE SHIP OR ARGENTINE CREW. (WE HAD ORIGINALLY UNDERSTOOD FROM PRESS REPORTS THAT DESTEFANIS WOULD BE HIRING A URUGUAYAN SHIP). YOU MAY TELL THE ICRC, FOR THEIR OWN INFORMATION, THAT THE ISLANDERS HAVE TOLD US THEY ATTACH IMPORTANCE TO THIS AND WE FEAR LAST MINUTE FLAG PROBLEMS WITH ANY ARGENTINE SHIP. HOWEVER CAREFUL THE ICRC INSPECTION, AN ARGENTINE CREW WOULD GIVE COLOUR TO FEARS OF FOUL PLAY.

4. IDEALLY WE WOULD PREFER THAT SR DESTEFANIS DID NOT SAIL WITH THE PARTY BUT IF IT WOULD HELP THE ICRC WITH THE ORGANISATION OF THE VISIT WE WOULD BE PREPARED TO AGREE TO THAT. WE WOULD NOT EXPECT HIM TO LAND WITH THE RELATIVES OF ARGENTINES WHO DIED ON THE FALKLANDS.

5. WE WOULD EXPECT THE ICRC TO DO A THOROUGH PRELIMINARY CHECK AND GIVE US A LIST OF PEOPLE WHOM THEY BELIEVED TO BE GENUINE NEXT OF KIN OF ARGENTINES KILLED ON THE FALKLANDS AND IN THE AIR. WE AGREE THE EXCLUSION OF THE RELATIVES OF THOSE WHO DIED AT SEA. WE ACCEPT THAT IN THE LAST ANALYSIS RESPONSIBILITY FOR APPROVING THE LIST WOULD BE OURS.

6. FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE ICRC ONLY AT THIS STAGE THEY SHOULD KNOW THAT WE HAVE BEEN GIVING PRELIMINARY THOUGHT TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE DETAIL OF THE VISIT. WE SHOULD NEED TO KNOW THE DETAILS OF THE SHIP'S ROUTE AND TIMINGS BEFORE LEAVING PORT: THE VESSEL WOULD BE ESCORTED TO AN ANCHORAGE: DISEMBARKATION AND EMBARKATION THERE WOULD BE UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE BRITISH FORCES WHO ARE ALONE IN A POSITION TO ARRANGE IT: THE DURATION OF THE VISIT TO THE CEMETERY SHOULD NOT EXCEED 3 HOURS AND NO VISITORS WOULD BE ACCEPTED IN MILITARY UNIFORM.

7. AGAINST THIS FURTHER BACKGROUND, WE ASSUME THE ICRC WILL NOW

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PUT THE CONDITIONS IN OUR TELNO 80 TO DESTEFANIS AS SOON AS  
POSSIBLE.

PYM

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COMMENT WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER HAS WRITTEN ON TELNO. 134  
OF 31 MARCH FROM UKMIS GENEVA - *attached.*

Argentine Next of Kin Visit to the Falklands

The Prime Minister wants the FCO to know:

We have gone as far as we possibly can to allow a visit. We cannot go further. We must bear in mind:

- (i) Permanent hostilities have not ceased;
- (ii) the opposition of many of the islanders.

Therefore the only channel for organisation is the ICRC. It would be astonishing if they refused. Those who visit would obviously have to pay all the costs. If the purpose is to see the graves of their relatives, the answer is for a proper ship to transfer the remains to Argentina.

(N.B. John Coles had written on top of this telegram "The FCO are sending a reply today"(dated 31 March).  
The PM is not happy with the telegram.)

ANYWAY ERE GOES THE DESK BY

The F.I.C.O. are sending a  
reply to this today.

A.F.C. 31/3

We have gone as far as  
we possibly can to allow a  
visit. We cannot go further.

We must bear in mind

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② the opposition of many of the islanders

the only channel for  
organisation is

GVA/FCO 03/31 the ICRC

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they refused. Those who

OO MONTEVIDEO DESKBY 310600Z

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PP WASHINGTON pay all the costs.

PP UKMIS NEW YORK If the purpose is

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GPS 850

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FM UKMIS GENEVA 310915Z MAR 83

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELNO 134 OF 31 MAR

INFO IMMEDIATE MONTEVIDEO

INFO PRIORITY WASHINGTON AND UKMIS NEW YORK

MY TELNO 128; YOUR TELNO 80 AND KYLES/SQUIRE TELECON OF 30 MARCH:

ARGENTINE NEXT OF KIN VISIT

1. AS REPORTED IN TELCON UNDER REFERENCE, JOSSERON OF ICRC

Advance Copy  
IMMEDIATE

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S/A (1) One/Dw  
1010 (4)

advanced  
Lead FID  
Mr. Giffard  
Mr. Lee

CALLED ON CHANCERY LATE YESTERDAY AFTERNOON. WE NEED INSTRUCTIONS ON THE DETAILED POINTS IN PARA 7 BELOW.

2. JOSSERON BEGAN BY STATING THAT ICRC HAD GIVEN CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO THE REQUEST THAT ONE OF THEIR REPRESENTATIVES ACCOMPANY THE UK NEXT OF KIN PARTY TO THE FALKLANDS. ICRC RESOURCES WERE, HOWEVER, FULLY STRETCHED AT PRESENT. MOREOVER, THEY DID NOT BELIEVE THEIR ABSENCE WOULD IN ANY WAY HINDER THE SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME OF THE VISIT. THEY HAD THEREFORE RELUCTANTLY TO DECLINE THE INVITATION (COPY OF ICRC LETTER FOLLOWS BY BAG). JOSSERON POINTED OUT HOWEVER THAT AS AN ICRC DELEGATION WOULD BE IN MONTEVIDEO FROM 4 APRIL (INSPECTIONS PRISONS), A REPRESENTATIVE WOULD BE MOST WILLING TO MEET THE UK NEXT OF KIN BEFORE THE SHIP DEPARTS ON THE EVENING OF 5 APRIL. THEY WOULD REQUIRES ONLY 24 HOURS NOTICE.

3. ON THE PROPOSED ARGENTINE NEXT OF KIN VISIT, JOSSERON MADE CLEAR THAT ICRC HAD NOT YET DISCUSSED WITH DESTEFANIS ANY OF THE CONDITIONS CONTAINED IN YOUR TUR. THEY WISHED FIRST TO DISCUSS WITH US THE DETAILS OF EACH CONDITION, AND THE DEGREE TO WHICH WE WISHED THEM INVOLVED. IN PARTICULAR, THE WORD 'ORGANISE', IN ITS STRICT SENSE, CAUSED THEM DIFFICULTY. JOSSERON MADE IT CLEAR THAT ICRC DID NOT (REPEAT NOT) HAVE THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE EITHER TO FIND A SHIP (AND BY IMPLICATION A CREW) OR TO FINANCE THE JOURNEY. THEY WOULD HOWEVER BE FULLY PREPARED TO SUPERVISE THE ENTIRE VISIT AND WOULD INSPECT THE SHIP AS WE REQUIRED. THEY AGREED, WITHOUT CONDITION, TO THE FLYING OF THE RED CROSS FLAG. JOSSERON WENT ON TO POINT OUT THAT ACCORDING TO VARIOUS REPORTS, DESTEFANIS SEEMED TO HAVE PREPARATIONS ALREADY WELL UNDERWAY. WHILE THIS PRESUMABLY IMPLIED BOTH AN ARGENTINE SHIP AND CREW (TWO OF THE CONDITIONS UNACCEPTABLE TO US), JOSSERON GAVE THE CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT ICRC WERE QUITE PREPARED TO ACCEPT SUCH ARRANGEMENTS. THIS VIEW IS NO DOUBT GOVERNED BY THE FACT THAT ICRC SEE NO OTHER PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE WITHIN THE SHORT TIME AVAILABLE. WHATEVER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THEY WOULD HAVE NO PROBLEM IN COMMUNICATING TO US THE NAME OF THE VESSEL.

4. AS REGARDS DESTEFANIS HIMSELF, ICRC REPEATED THEIR POSITION AS DISCUSSED WITH LONG ON 25 MARCH (PARA 5 OF MY TELNO 122). WE EXPLAINED THAT OUR INSTRUCTIONS REMAINED AS SET OUT IN PARA 3(D) OF YOUR TUR. WE AGREED HOWEVER TO RE-EMPHASISE THEIR VIEWS WITH YOU ON THIS POINT.

5. JOSSERON THE RAISED THE QUESTION OF VERIFICATION OF THE NEXT OF KIN. ICRC WERE QUITE PREPARED TO VERIFY, AS FAR AS



5. JOSSERON ~~THE~~ RAISED THE QUESTION OF VERIFICATION OF THE NEXT OF KIN. ICRC WERE QUITE PREPARED TO VERIFY, AS FAR AS POSSIBLE, ANY LIST PROVIDED BY DESTEFANIS. THE FINAL DECISION ON WHO WERE ACCEPTED WOULD REST WITH HMG. JOSSERON POINTED OUT THAT ICRC WOULD NOT (REPEAT NOT) ACCEPT RELATIVES OF EITHER THE CREW OF THE BELGRANO OR THE AIRCREW. WHERE NEXT OF KIN OF UNIDENTIFIED INFANTRYMEN WERE INVOLVED, THEY WOULD CROSS CHECK THE RELATIVES' CLAIMS WITH THEIR OWN RECORDS AND WITH THE ARGENTINE MILITARY AUTHORITIES.

6. ON THE REMAINING CONDITIONS, JOSSERON REAFFIRMED THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF THESE AS SET IN IN PARA 3(B), (E), (F), (H) AND (I) OF YOUR TUR.

7. ICRC NOW WISH TO CONVEY TO DESTEFANIS, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, OUR AGREED CONDITIONS. BUT BEFORE DOING SO, THEY WISH US, GIVEN THEIR ABOVE COMMENTS TO CLARIFY THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A) WITHIN THE TERMS OF HMG'S STATEMENT, HOW IN SPECIFIC TERMS DO WE WISH ICRC TO ORGANISE THE JOURNEY?

B) CAN WE IN ANY CIRCUMSTANCES ACCEPT THE USE OF DESTEFANIS' SHIP? (IF SO, WE WOULD PRESUMABLY REQUIRE THAT IT FLEW ONLY THE RED CROSS FLAG)

*The answer  
to this will  
be no.*

C) CAN WE CLARIFY FURTHER OUR POSITION ON THE NATIONALITY OF THE CREW?

D) IF DESTEFANIS IS UNWILLING TO ACCEPT THE IDEA THAT HE SHOULD NOT TRAVEL AT ALL, CAN WE ACCEPT ICRC'S SUGGESTION THAT HE SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO TRAVEL BUT NOT DISEMBARK?

8. AS MENTIONED IN THE TELECON UNDER REFERENCE, ICRC WILL HAVE A REPRESENTATIVE ON CALL IN GENEVA THROUGHOUT THE EASTER BREAK SHOULD WE WISH THEM TO CONTACT DESTENFANIS DURING THAT PERIOD.

#### COMMENT

9. ICRC FULLY AGREE WITH HMG THAT THE VISIT SHOULD BE PURELY HUMANITARIAN; AND SHOULD BE ORGANISED IN SUCH A WAY AS TO AVOID ANY POSSIBILITY OF UNTOWARD ACTIVITY BY THE ARGENTINE PARTY. THEY REALISE THAT THIS WOULD REFLECT ON THEM. THEIR WILLINGNESS TO FLY THE RED CROSS FLAG GIVE US SOME LEEWAY OVER OUR OTHER CONDITIONS E.G. THE PROBLEM OF THE SHIP'S AND CREW'S NATIONALITY. YOU WILL I KNOW HAVE IN MIND THE POINT THAT, HAVING MADE PUBLIC OUR WILLINGNESS, IN PRINCIPLE, TO SEE A STRICTLY HUMANITATION VISIT PROCEED, WE SHOULD NOT ALLOW

~~CREW'S NATIONALITY. YOU WILL I KNOW HAVE IN MIND THE POINT~~  
~~THAT, HAVING MADE PUBLIC OUR WILLINGNESS, IN PRINCIPLE, TO SEE~~  
~~A STRICTLY HUMANITARIAN VISIT PROCEED, WE SHOULD NOT ALLOW~~  
DESTEFANIS THE OPPORTUNITY TO ARGUE THAT OUR CONDITIONS CANNOT  
BE FULFILLED BEFORE WINTER SETS IN: ESPECIALLY AS HE APPEARS  
TO HAVE A SHIP, CREW AND PASSENGERS READY TO SET SAIL ON 16  
APRIL.

10 FCO PLEASE PASS COPIES TO MODUK (DS 14).

MARSHALL

NNNN

SENT AT 311022Z AA