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HL



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

GRS 563

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DESKBY 311600Z

FM PCG 311500Z MAR 83

TO IMMEDIATE URGENT GENEVA

TELEGRAM NUMBER 083 OF 31 MARCH 1983

AND TO IMMEDIATE PERSONAL FOR CIVIL COMMISSIONER PORT STANLEY,
MONTVIDEO, PRIORITY WASHINGTON AND URGENT 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 DESTEPANIS. WE HOPE THEY WILL MAKE
CLEAR TO US 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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PM PCO 311500Z MAR 83
TO IMMEDIATE UKMIS GENEVA
TELEGRAM NUMBER 083 OF 31 MARCH 1983
AND TO IMMEDIATE PERSONAL FOR CIVIL COMMISSIONER PORT STANLEY,
MONTEVIDEO, PRIORITY WASHINGTON AND UKMIS 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 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.)