

cc RJ



Prime Minister

You will wish to consider Foreign and Commonwealth Office
whether it is really right to
approve Argentina via the Swiss
about this before any approval
is made to the Islanders.

London SW1A 2AH

24 June 1983

Discuss with Foreign Secretary at your
weekly meeting?

A.S.C. 24/6.

Dear John,

We need to work
this out much more
than the enclosed letter
has done. However

Falklands: Argentine Next-of-Kin

this leaves the terms
of the visit for
negotiation.

In my letter of 17 June about Destefanis' visa
application, I said that the Foreign and Commonwealth
Secretary would be putting forward recommendations about
the possibility of a fresh initiative for a properly-
organised visit to the Falklands by Argentine next-of-kin.

Andrew
do. There

Sir Geoffrey Howe is in favour of action to promote
a suitably-prepared Argentine visit. He considers this
desirable both on humanitarian grounds, and in terms of
domestic and international opinion. We have so far gained
a certain amount of credit through our treatment of the
Argentine dead, which has been in marked contrast to the
callous disregard shown for them by their own Government.
Events showed our suspicions of Destefanis to be wholly
justified, and he himself emerged from the episode at
the end of April widely discredited. Meanwhile, however,
the Argentines have shown no disposition to remove their
dead from the Islands, as we would wish them to.

are
certain
conditions
that must
be met.

We have a few months available to us now in which
to make plans for a visit in the next Falklands spring or
summer that would be acceptable to the Islanders and to
public opinion in Britain, as well as to the ICRC and
the international community in general. The Foreign and
Commonwealth Secretary considers that, if we do not, we
would stand to lose the ground internationally which
our record so far has earned us. A well-managed visit, on
the other hand, would be helpful to us internationally, not
least at the United Nations. In both contexts it will be
remembered that we have had our own, highly successful,
next-of-kin visit.

Discussion
with a
prepared
paper
please
mb

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary believes we
should take and retain the initiative in working out
arrangements. He is satisfied that the events of April

/and



- 2 -

and May showed the conditions relayed to Destefanis by the ICRC to be the right basis for a visit. Your letter of 4 May suggested that the fresh initiative should be with the ICRC themselves. While Sir Geoffrey Howe certainly sees advantage in the ICRC retaining the role set out for them in our earlier conditions, he doubts whether they would welcome being asked to make the running at this stage. More appropriate, in our view, would be an approach to the Argentine Government. Their Note to the Swiss Government, and their published communique, both of 29 April, indicated that they were studying the possibilities of a visit for close relatives. We have a clear opening, without committing ourselves to anything, to enter into a dialogue with the Argentines through the Swiss. The Destefanis episode showed that we are unlikely to be able to achieve a satisfactory arrangement with any non-Governmental body in Argentina. The present moment may be particularly timely: you may have seen from a recent telegram from Buenos Aires (enclosed) that a senior Argentine official, in expressing the hope that we would not grant Destefanis a visa, said that the Argentines were thinking in terms of planning on a Government-to-Government basis.

We would therefore propose to ask the Swiss to make a preliminary approach to the Argentines in the following terms:

- (a) The British Government have noted the line taken by the Argentine Government on 29 April, and would be interested to have further details of Argentine thinking. In particular, HMG have noted the Argentine stipulation that the visit should be for close relatives only, which accords with British thinking (and would, we assume, exclude Destefanis).
- (b) The other British conditions for an Argentine visit remain basically those put to the ICRC and relayed by them to Destefanis in March. We would envisage the ICRC playing a central role in any further arrangements.
- (c) We would wish specifically to retain the condition that the Argentine party should travel in a non-Argentine vessel. This should fly the Red Cross flag. We believe that a vessel from a neutral nation, such as Uruguay, offers the most promising prospects. We should be grateful to learn of Argentine thinking on this aspect.

/I



- 3 -

I should add, in amplification of (c) above, that we have considered the use of a British vessel but concluded that quite apart from its likely unacceptability in Argentine eyes, the cost of chartering a vessel (£6 - 700,000) could not be justified. (The MOD tell us that they see great difficulties about use of a Royal Navy ship). As far as flags are concerned, while the Islanders would no doubt much prefer any vessel used to fly a British courtesy flag, to insist on this in our first approach could cause the initiative to break down at the outset. A Uruguayan flag may in any case be acceptable or the Red Cross flag alone may do.

We must continue to take account of the feelings of the Falkland Islanders. They should have been reassured by our firm handling of Destefanis and may be more disposed to accept a properly-prepared trip in three to four months' time. But, while we would of course remain in close contact with Sir Rex Hunt as plans develop, we see no need to consult the Islanders about the first, provisional approach to the Argentines.

It would be most important that there should be no leak of the substance of the proposed initial approach. At this stage we would only propose, in public and to the Islanders, to say that our readiness in principle to accept a properly-prepared visit still stands and that we have noted the Argentine authorities' public statement that they were still considering the possibilities for this. But careful thought will need to be given to public presentation of our position once we have made the initial contact, in the light of the Argentine response, to ensure that we get all the credit for any progress and none of the blame for any failure.

I am copying this to the Private Secretaries of the other members of OD (EM).

Yours ever
J E Holmes
(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
Number 10 Downing Street

CONFIDENTIAL



c. Ho

Surf

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

27 June 1983

Dear John,

FALKLANDS: ARGENTINE NEXT-OF-KIN

The Prime Minister has seen your letter of 24 June containing the advice of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary about action to promote a visit to the Falklands by Argentine next-of-kin.

Mrs. Thatcher would like this matter to be discussed at OD(EM) on the basis of a detailed paper.

She has commented that the proposed approach to the Argentines would appear to some extent to leave the terms of the visit open for negotiation (e.g. the invitation to the Argentines to state their views on the possibility of the party travelling in a non-Argentine vessel). She is inclined to think that we should state in full the basic conditions which, in our view, must be met. Nor, at this stage, do I think that the Prime Minister is entirely convinced that an approach to the Argentines through the Swiss is the best way to proceed.

I should be grateful if Richard Hatfield, to whom I am copying this letter, could arrange for a meeting of OD(EM) as soon as possible and if, in conjunction with the MOD, you could prepare a suitable paper. I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries of the other Members of OD(EM).

Yours ever

John Gles.

J.E. Holmes, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

CONFIDENTIAL

Surf

FILE

da

CONFIDENTIAL



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

24 May 1983

Falklands: Argentine Next-of-Kin

The Prime Minister has seen your letter of 23 May about the possibility of a fresh initiative for a properly organised visit to the Falklands by Argentine next-of-kin. She agrees with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary that consideration of this must wait until after the Election.

I am copying this letter to Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

A. J. COLES

John Holmes, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

CONFIDENTIAL



Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

23 May 1983

Para. 1 reflects something
you said to me - but
you may agree that any initiative
should now wait until after the
election.

A.J.C. $\frac{23}{5}$

Yes not

Dear John,

Falklands: Argentine Next-of-Kin

Thank you for your letter of 4 May about the possibility of a fresh initiative for a properly-organised visit to the Falklands by Argentine next-of-kin.

Mr Pym thinks that consideration of this must wait until after the election. Preliminary thinking here is that, while we should keep up our efforts to persuade the Argentines to take back their dead, there are advantages in taking the initiative to promote a properly organised next-of-kin visit and that we should seek to retain full ICRC involvement. One possibility would be to maintain all our conditions but perhaps offer a British ship at British cost to take an acceptable group to the islands. The practicalities of this, including the likely reaction of the Falkland Islanders, are being explored. But no decisions are needed at this stage.

Meanwhile, we need to keep the ICRC in play, without stirring them up. We therefore propose to round off our exchanges with them about Destefanis by assuring them that our original offer of a properly-organised visit remains on the table; saying that we have noted what the Argentine Government communique of 29 April (copy enclosed) said about the possibility of a visit of close relatives; and asking whether the ICRC would be prepared in principle to involve themselves in any future visit as they did for the Destefanis proposal. We would also make the first two of these points to the Swiss and the Brazilians as the two protecting powers. If asked about this our public line would be that, since the Destefanis episode, we remained in contact with the ICRC and the two protecting powers; that we still want the Argentines to take back their dead; but that we had left the ICRC and the protecting powers in no doubt of our continuing willingness in principle to accept a properly-prepared visit.

I am copying this to Richard Mottram (MOD) and Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever
John Holmes
(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

ARGENTINA: Relations -

98 34.



UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION OF TEXT OF ARGENTINE COMMUNIQUE OF
29 APRIL 1983

PREAMBLE

In view of the fact that it is one year since the start of active hostilities in the South Atlantic conflict, and

considering that it is therefore right to pay the Argentine nation's tribute and homage to those who died defending our national sovereignty, the Military Committee therefore resolves:-

Article 1 - to pay homage at 1700 hours [2000 hrs GMT] on 2 May 1983 - at the place where the Argentine Navy cruiser 'General Belgrano' sank - to all civilian and military combatants killed in the operations conducted in the South Atlantic, detaching for this purpose one surface vessel of the Argentine Navy and one aircraft of the Argentine Air Force to drop floral wreaths on behalf of the three Armed Services.

Article 2 - to continue to analyse the possibilities and feasibility of undertaking a journey to the Malvinas Islands, to pay homage to those who fell for the Fatherland and are buried in this corner of our territory.

Article 3 - to direct that the groups going on this journey should be made up exclusively of direct relatives of those who died in the South Atlantic operations.

Article 4 - to organize and carry out the action following from the above directions, according to humanitarian criteria, bearing in mind that the action must be within the framework of the current norms of international law and endeavouring to ensure that it does not affect the diplomatic measures which the country is undertaking internationally.

Article 5 - consequent upon the contents of the above articles, it is established:

(A) Faced with the insensitive and intransigent attitude of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, which fails to understand the feelings of the relatives of those Argentines at rest in the Malvinas Islands, and aware that the unavoidable responsibility of the national authorities is to watch over the safety of all their citizens, to forbid any activity which does not conform to the stipulations of the present Resolution.

/(B)

(B) to put at the disposal of those relatives who wish to be present at the ceremony on 2 May the ship 'Lago Lacar', to accompany the units of the Argentine Armed Forces who will pay homage in the manner described in Article 1.

(C) to settle all expenses involved in the fulfilment of the present Resolution; these will be paid for by the State.

Article 6 - The National Directorate of the Official Registrar desires that this Resolution be promulgated, fulfilled and passed to the Archives.

ARGENTINA: Relations

PA 34

