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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

12 July 1983

[Handwritten signature]

Prime Minister

To note.

Don John

A.S.C. 12/7

Argentine Next-of-Kin: Message from Destefanis to the Prime Minister

Destefanis sent a telex message to the Prime Minister on 6 July via the Embassy in Washington, asking for re-consideration of the Home Secretary's decision to deny him a visa to enter this country. I enclose a summary translation of his message.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary thinks no reply should be sent. Destefanis's message is, as usual, in offensive and polemical terms. There is no requirement to give the reasons for a decision of this type by the Home Secretary, and no right of appeal.

As Sir Geoffrey Howe pointed out at the meeting of OD(EM) on 6 July, Destefanis has been in contact by telephone with Mr Tam Dalyell MP, and there have been other recent reports to confirm our earlier impression that Mr Dalyell might be in league with Destefanis. This makes the question of Destefanis's visa and of a possible Argentine next-of-kin visit more likely to become the subject of Parliamentary and press interest in the next few weeks.

We must be careful to ensure that our handling of Destefanis does not cut across our main purpose of trying to set up a properly-organised visit. As agreed in OD(EM) on 6 July, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary will first arrange for the Falkland Islanders to be consulted. Sir Geoffrey Howe believes that the Civil Commissioner must put the matter to them personally. Sir Rex Hunt is at present in this country on leave and will be suitably briefed on the lines agreed at OD(EM). He will be returning to the Falkland Islands on 29 July having had a meeting with the Prime Minister on 26 July and with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary the previous day. We hope he will be able rapidly to report the Island Councillors' agreement to our proposed arrangements. The next step will be for the Swiss to put our conditions to the Argentine authorities.

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Ministers have agreed that, during these first stages of our plan, all exchanges should remain confidential. This might seem likely to inhibit us somewhat if Mr Dalyell and his friends try to put us under pressure about Destefanis. But we already have an interim public line which the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary thinks more than adequate. The British Interests Section in Buenos Aires, in informing Destefanis of the Home Secretary's decision, referred to our readiness in principle to permit a properly-organised visit to the Islands by Argentine next of kin, said that we had noted what the Argentine Government said publicly about this possibility in their communique of 29 April, and emphasised that we would not wish Destefanis to be involved in any plans for a visit that might take shape. This should enable us to deal comprehensively in the next few weeks with the press and Parliament, to whom we would if necessary also confirm that Destefanis's message to the Prime Minister has been received. Indeed, such a statement could even help the evolution of a properly-organised visit by indicating, without compromising any of our confidential negotiations, that we had the Argentines' position - together with other factors - under active consideration.

I am copying this letter to Tony Rawsthorne (Home Office).

Answer
[Signature]

(B J P Fall)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street



INFORMAL SUMMARY TRANSLATION OF TELEX MESSAGE SENT IN SPANISH TO HM EMBASSY, WASHINGTON, ON 6 JULY 1983, FROM OSVALDO DESTEFANIS, FOR ONWARD TRANSMISSION TO THE PRIME MINISTER

The Home Office has recommended that I be refused a visa to enter your country. My visit to the UK would have been to agree with your Government the conditions under which the 522 families of those lost in the Falklands conflict would be able to visit the graves at Port Darwin. You had told Parliament that there would be no objection to a relatives visit for purely humanitarian reasons.

The ICRC has made known to your Government that our journey was precisely for humanitarian reasons: it is difficult to understand why the Home Office should recommend that I be denied the visa which I need to agree the conditions for a strictly humanitarian visit, saying that my visit would not be conducive to the public good. I believe it would be conducive to the public good to work to avoid a confrontation like that which has caused the death of hundreds of Argentines and Britons caused by the negative attitude of British Governments to negotiations on the Falklands.

To demonstrate my good faith, I propose appearing before Parliament to discuss publicly the conditions with which the hundreds of relatives would need to comply and so that your Government and your people can understand clearly that this is an absolutely humanitarian and totally apolitical matter. It would be inhuman on your part to deny us a right recognised by a large segment of the British people and by the Anglican Church. Demonstrate before the eyes of the world your great spirit and do not look for political intentions in our sorrow.



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Argentine Relations

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

13 July, 1983

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ARGENTINE NEXT-OF-KIN: MESSAGE FROM DESTEFANIS TO THE
PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister has seen your letter of 12 July. She agrees with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary that no reply should be sent to Destefanis's message. Mrs Thatcher has noted the contents of the rest of your letter.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Tony Rawsthorne (Home Office).

A. J. COLES

B.J.P. Fall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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