

SUBJECT

cc: Mr. [unclear]



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

25 July 1983

Falklands: Call by the Civil Commissioner

When Sir Rex Hunt called on the Prime Minister this afternoon, the question arose of the proposed visit to the Falkland Islands by Argentine next-of-kin. Mrs. Thatcher said that she considered that this visit must take place. It would of course be necessary to consult the Islanders and persuade them that it was in everybody's interests to get the visit over. Until we did so, we should be open to criticism.

Sir Rex Hunt said that he might have difficulty in persuading some of the Councillors that the visit should go ahead. For the majority of Islanders, the priority was for Argentina to take back the bodies of its dead. But the more reasonable Councillors and Islanders would accept a visit which was clearly humanitarian. The stand taken by HMG against the earlier proposal for a visit canvassed by Mr. Destefanis was helpful in that respect.

Sir Rex Hunt said that there could well be difficulties about the flag to be flown on the vessel concerned. The Islanders might well wish the courtesy flag to be flown. The Prime Minister commented that it was necessary to be realistic. What would happen if we made this a requirement and the vessel then arrived without the courtesy flag? Sir Rex Hunt said that he would do his best to sell the idea that a Red Cross flag would be sufficient. He reiterated that he was sure that the Islanders would accept a visit which was on a genuinely humanitarian basis. There might of course be some difficulty in determining the bona fides of the next-of-kin.

A. J. COLES

Brian Fall, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.