



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

12 September, 1983

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Dear John,

Falklands Debate at the Next General Assembly

I am sorry to find that I still owe you a reply to your letter of 1 August.

There is no danger of the United States voting in favour of the Argentine draft resolution while the Prime Minister and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary are in America as the vote cannot be held before the second half of October.

You asked for a note of the position on Mayotte. We concluded last year that we could tax the French with the Mayotte parallel. We raised the subject with them on several occasions at official level and Mr Pym raised it with Cheysson at an informal meeting of Community Foreign Ministers at Hesselet on 16/17 October 1982. We consider that we should use it again this year.

In a plebiscite in the Comoro Islands in 1974 a majority of the population voted to become independent, but a majority of the Mahorais voted to remain French. The French therefore detached Mayotte from the newly-independent State and gave it a special status of Collectivité Territoriale. Although the French do have contacts with the Comorians about Mayotte, these are not about sovereignty. Indeed the French have consistently refused to negotiate on sovereignty.

The French line is that their hands are tied by Article 53 of the Constitution of the French Republic, the last clause of which reads:

'No cession, exchange, or acquisition of territory is valid without the consent of the populations concerned'.

We have assembled a number of French statements about the 'sacred right' to self-determination, and about the secondary significance of geographical location by comparison with this principle, which we think will be useful in dealing with the French on this question.

France's Community partners always abstain on the annual Mayotte resolution and we shall be making use of this point also, as we did last year. But the Mayotte resolutions include an explicit 'reaffirmation' of Comorian sovereignty over Mayotte which our partners would regard as providing a justification

/for



for abstention which is absent in the Falklands case.

*Yours ever*

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