



Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

This overlong letter concludes that we should wait for a new government in Argentina before taking up again the idea of a next of kin visit - and meanwhile not reveal the details of our proposal publicly.

28 October, 1983

Dear John,

Agree?

I referred to the proposed visit during my talks with the J-6 at A.J.C. 25/10. The U.N. I think it would be a mistake to

Falklands: Possible Visit by Argentine Next-of-kin

It was agreed in OD(EM) on 6 July that an initiative should be taken to facilitate a visit to the Argentine Cemetery at Darwin, on the conditions discussed at that meeting. The Foreign Secretary was invited first to arrange for the Falkland Islanders to be consulted: Sir Rex Hunt's telegram number 447 of 2 August 1983 (copy enclosed) reported the unanimous consent of the Islands' Council.

Cancel this offer a) from the H.C. if

We duly approached the Swiss Government. Their Ambassador delivered to the Argentine Foreign Ministry on 19 August a Memorandum setting out the conditions. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, the President of the International Red Cross and the Government of Uruguay were told, in confidence, of the action the Swiss had taken on our behalf.

asked and b) from the U.N. However

There has been no response from Buenos Aires. If the present Junta had managed a timely response, it might have been possible to organise a visit before Christmas - the timing suggested by the Prime Minister at the meeting of OD(EM) on 6 July. Now that we are so much closer to the transition to civilian rule, however, the Foreign Secretary would prefer to await the assumption of power by the new regime before asking the Swiss to take the matter up again. The proposals would be a convincing means of demonstrating to the new rulers of Argentina that we are serious in what we have been saying about wishing to improve bilateral relations in certain clearly defined fields. The new government will not come to power before December, at the earliest. There would, therefore, still be time for a visit before the end of the forthcoming Falklands summer in mid-May.

it would seem as if we were a different attitude to the new govt. and that our resolve on sovereignty was weakening

At the OD(EM) meeting on 6 July, Sir Geoffrey made the point that a British initiative to permit a visit, even if it failed, would be helpful internationally, not least in the United Nations. The Argentines' silence made it necessary to look again at the possibility of referring to our proposals at the time of the General Assembly Debate on the Falklands, expected to take place in the week beginning 7 November. Sir Geoffrey believes that any decision to refer to our proposals in public should be taken in the light of the likely impact of any announcement on the prospects for that visit itself,



rather than in terms of our tactics at the General Assembly or elsewhere. Our conditions ~~do~~ⁱⁿclude that we regard it as essential that discussion of the proposed visit should remain confidential until all concerned are agreed that the time is ripe for a public statement. Revelation in the General Assembly of our proposals would earn us some extra goodwill, but it would be unlikely to make a significant difference to the voting pattern; and it would certainly not improve the prospects for Argentine acceptance of our proposals. Sir Geoffrey thinks that it will only really be open to us to make mileage ~~unilaterally~~^{internationally} through the public revelation of our very reasonable conditions if the new Argentine government, having been given a decent period for reflection, clearly indicate that they are not prepared to organise a visit on these terms. Until then, our provision for confidentiality must apply as much to them as to the present regime.

Sir Geoffrey accordingly proposes to instruct Sir John Thomson not to reveal any details of our proposals during the Falklands Debate. We envisage giving Sir John discretion to refer, in the context of our efforts to normalise bilateral relations, to readiness in principle to accept a suitably-prepared Next-of-Kin visit, under ICRC supervision: this is the line we have taken in public for some time, ever since the time of Destefanis' attempted trip. But Sir John Thomson should give no hint of the approach that has been made by the Swiss in August.

If the Prime Minister is content with the tactics recommended in this letter, we propose to tell the Swiss Government, in strict confidence, that we wish the matter to be left alone for the time being, on the grounds that this offers the best prospect of eventually coming to a satisfactory arrangement with Argentina. We would simultaneously tell the Falkland Islands' Councils of our thinking - Sir Rex Hunt and the Councillors are already well aware of the Argentines' failure to respond, and share our judgement that the desirability of setting up a once-and-for-all visit on satisfactory terms must be the primary consideration. We would also keep the UN Secretary-General, President of the ICRC and the Government of Uruguay generally aware of how matters stand.

Yours ever,

Peter Ricketts

(P F Ricketts)
Private Office

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

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FROM PORT STANLEY 022040Z AUG 83
TO IMMEDIATE FCO
TELEGAM NUMBER 447 OF 2 AUGUST

APF 225/4		
RECEIVED IN REGISTRY		
- 3 AUG 1983		
DESK OFFICER		REGISTRY
INDEX	PA	Action Taken

ARGENTINE NEXT-OF-KIN VISIT

1. THE PROPOSAL THAT HMG SHOULD TAKE INITIATIVE ON ARGENTINE NEXT OF KIN VISIT THROUGH THE SWISS AUTHORITIES WAS AGREED UNANIMOUSLY BY COUNCILLORS TODAY (2 AUGUST). IN PARTICULAR THEY ACCEPTED THAT WE NEED NOT INSIST ON THE COURTESY FLAG BEING FLOWN (BUT THAT RED CROSS FLAG MUST): THAT SMALL, CAREFULLY CHOSEN, POOL OF JOURNALISTS BE EMBARKED: AND THAT IMMIGRATION PROCEDURES COULD BE WAIVED.

2. COUNCILLORS HOPED THAT THEIR REPRESENTATIVES AT THE COMMITTEE OF 24 WOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE USE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS VALUE OF THIS PROPOSAL. THERE WAS SOME CONCERN THAT ARGENTINA MIGHT INSIST ON PROPOSAL BEING KEPT CONFIDENTIAL FOR THE MOMENT., BUT COUNCILLORS HOPED THAT, SHOULD ARGENTINA TRY TO MAKE PROPAGANDA GAINS AT THE UN, HMG'S PROPOSAL WOULD THEN BE PUBLICISED UNDERLINING THAT ISLAND COUNCILLORS HAD AGREED IT ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS.

HUNT

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From the Private Secretary

31 October 1983

Falklands: Possible Visit by Argentine Next-of-Kin

The Prime Minister has seen your letter of 28 October recording the view of the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary that we should not reveal in public, in particular at the United Nations General Assembly, the details of our proposal for an Argentine next-of-kin visit to the Falkland Islands.

The Prime Minister has commented that she referred to this visit during her talks with the UN Secretary-General in New York last month. She is inclined to think that it would be a mistake to conceal our offer (a) from the House of Commons if asked and (b) from the United Nations. Moreover, to conceal the details might make it appear that we were adopting a different attitude to the new Government in Argentina and that our resolve on sovereignty was weakening.

A. J. COLES

Peter Ricketts, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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