



PM/82/83

A.J.C. 15/10

PRIME MINISTER

Mr Cranley Onslow's Visit to the Falkland Islands: 3-8 October

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1. You may be interested to see a copy of Cranley Onslow's report to me following his recent visit to the Falkland Islands. I mentioned this in Cabinet on 14 October.
 2. We still await the Islanders' own reaction to the Shackleton Report and, as Cranley himself stresses, it would be premature to take final decisions on the major issues until this is available. But I should say that I find his views convincing and sensible and believe that, coming as they do from recent first-hand knowledge, they should be given all due weight.
 3. I am copying this to the other members of OD(FAF) and to Sir R Armstrong.

(FRANCIS PYM)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

18 October, 1982



Secretary of State

SHACKLETON REPORT : COMMENTS ON RECOMMENDATIONS

Falkland Islands Development Agency (FIDA) (2.9)

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2. I see no need for a FIDA office in London. The Falkland Islands Government Office shortly to be established here can perfectly well take care of any FIDA responsibilities on a repayment basis.

Transfer of Farm Ownership (2.10)

3. I doubt whether the takeover and splitting up of absentee-owned farms would have the effects that Shackleton envisages. This is an emotive issue in the Islands. Clearly there is room for improvement in the pattern of farm ownership. Equally clearly, some of the younger and more talented farm managers, who form the backbone of the community, must be given a chance to own their own land: otherwise, many of them will leave and the Islands will lose men on whom the future critically depends. But Shackleton appears to have confused two objectives: preventing the remittances of profits out of the Islands by absentee landlords; and encouraging the growth of population on the land. And, in doing so, he has recommended a way forward which is likely to create problems of its own without necessarily fulfilling either purpose satisfactorily.

4. The problem of overseas remittances could more easily and equitably be dealt with by imposing a tax which would make the exercise unprofitable. This would hit the absentee landlords who have been soaking the Islands for years, while leaving the better absentee landlords (among whom I would include the FIC) who have been ploughing profits back relatively unscathed. This is a matter for the Islanders themselves to pursue, but I have left this thought with them.

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6. It follows that any population increase will have to be sought outside the farming sector, eg through the setting up of service and other small industries in the main population centres. (On which see paras 11-14 below.)

7. These fundamental objectives apart, there are practical problems associated with the implementation of Shackleton's recommendations. The legal basis for compulsory purchasing of farms would have to be carefully looked into; and we would need to be sure that there were in fact enough takers for the plots that would become available. Putting the land into FIDA's hands for an indefinite period would solve nothing.

8. In sum, there is scope for restructuring the farming sector, albeit for reasons other than those advanced by Shackleton. But it should be approached piecemeal and on a pragmatic basis, bearing in mind the limited extent of likely Islander demand. It should be possible on this basis to proceed by mutual agreement, buying up farms (or assisting individuals to do so) as they become available, without resort to compulsory purchase. As part of this process, some thought should be given to the possibility of the Falkland Islands Government retaining suitable sites for the setting up of population centres outside Stanley, for preference co-located with and catering for the needs of the garrison, and to splitting up land near Stanley into much smaller plots than envisaged by Shackleton (eg 50 acres) which would be suitable for market gardening (see also paras 26-27 below). It follows that we should not proceed with Shackleton's recommendation (2.10.3) to purchase all farms owned by absentee landlords as soon as is practically feasible.

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18. Deep Water Jetty (2.11.8). All the jetties in Stanley are in a bad way. Indeed, two of the three main jetties are close to physical collapse. But the first step must be a feasibility study of the harbour as a whole, and I recommend that this be set in hand urgently.

19. Energy Supplies (2.11.9). I agree with 2.11.9(a) and understand that it is already being implemented. On 2.11.9(b), the installation of wind turbines or other generators using locally available sources of energy has much to commend it, provided that this would be economically justifiable. But no-one in the Islands was able even to hazard a guess as to whether this would be so, and further ground work is clearly necessary before a decision is taken.

20. The Garrison (2.12). As far as composition of the garrison is concerned, I support Shackleton's recommendation that as many servicemen as possible should be accompanied by their wives. The arrangement now followed in Belize (by which the Commanding Officer and other senior officers and NCOs are posted on 18 month accompanied tours) would seem to be the obvious model.

21. The question of how far the garrison should be self-sufficient is more difficult. Clearly there must be some physical separation from the main centres of Islander population, and the garrison will need to provide many of its own facilities if the servicemen are not to swamp Islander life. But at the

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same time it can play a central role in revitalising the Islands' economy and should be encouraged to do so. Garrison demand alone should keep a substantial souvenir industry going. The garrison could also usefully look to the Islanders to provide much of their essential food supplies. This would both save money and provide a major shot in the arm for the process of rural diversification. There are, I know, problems in guaranteeing supplies to the troops but I see no reason why these should not be overcome.

22. For the other recommendations on the garrison, I found liaison between the Civil and Military Commissioners to be good, and consider that the existing machinery is fully adequate to the task. It is too early to consider what use could be made of spare capacity in the Royal Engineers for general infrastructure development over and above those projects already identified (eg putting back in order those roads in Stanley which military vehicles have been largely responsible for destroying). But the limited capability of the Sappers to help should not in itself be allowed to hinder rehabilitation and development work. Other means should if necessary be found to implement important civil projects.

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23. The recommendations in this section are essentially for the Falkland Islanders themselves to carry forward. But it was quite clear to me that there is an urgent need for a development officer on the spot and I consider it most important that the man that the ODA have identified for this position should take up his post as soon as possible.

24. I also cannot let pass the implicit assumption (2.13.4) that it will fall to the public sector alone to provide the financial expertise that the Islanders now lack. We should not encourage the Islanders to think that the Government alone will provide. As I have indicated above, I would see the Manager of the local branch of the Standard Chartered Bank as another key source of advice and finance, and indeed encouraged the Islanders during my visit to talk their projects out with him when he arrives. Commercial advice and credit can and should be allowed to play a vital role in the future development of the Islands.

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25. I have no specific comments on the financial aspects of the report other than those already subsumed above.

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Population Centres outside Stanley

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27. Given the difficulties of communication in the Falklands, this has obvious drawbacks. West Falkland, being further away from Stanley, is most affected. The possibility of buying a suitable area of land on West Falkland and setting it aside for development as a nucleus of population with its own shops and service industries should therefore be urgently investigated. The Fox Bay East farm on West Falkland, which I visited, is currently for sale, and we should not overlook the possibility of separating off the settlement area from the farm and using it for this purpose. At a later stage, we might profitably consider doing the same at Darwin/Goose Green and possibly also at San Carlos.

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Cranley Onslow

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FALKLAND ISLANDS VISIT

1. I visited the Falkland Islands from 3 to 8 October. ✓ 7/0.
I had useful talks with the Civil and Military Commissioners; held discussions with the Councillors, both informally, and formally at a joint meeting of the Councils; met many Islanders at a number of settlements in the Camp and addressed a public meeting in Port Stanley.

2. The process of reconstruction and rehabilitation is going ahead well and I am confident that the momentum can be maintained. Compensation to the value of £0.5 million has already been paid - most of the claims in Stanley have been met but the estimates of losses in the Camp are more difficult to establish. The mine fields have been marked and care is being taken to keep the people informed of what progress has been made and of future policy. By and large, there is a high degree of co-operation between the military and civil authorities at all levels. There are, of course, areas of potential friction over internal communication, accommodation for the Camp children attending school in Stanley, at the hospital which is very over-crowded, and about the state of the roads in Stanley which have been seriously damaged by military traffic. But both Commissioners are aware of the dangers and I am sure they are doing everything possible to keep things running smoothly.

3. The Islanders' first reaction to the Shackleton Report is that it should be implemented lock, stock and barrel. But they are not unresponsive to the argument that the report is not holy writ and, with encouragement, are prepared to establish priorities within Shackleton's recommendations and even to add ideas of their own. The holding of land is an emotive issue but not everyone I met wanted to own land even if they could obtain the necessary capital. There is certainly not unanimity in the view that sub-division of the large outside-owned holdings would lead to more productive farming. And, more worrying, there is evidence to suggest that the sub-division of farms, far from increasing the number of people employed on the land, would actually reduce it. New enterprises outside the farming sector are therefore required which will assure new immigrants if Shackleton's target of a population of 2,500 is to be achieved.

4. A constant theme among the people to whom I talked was that the present situation offered a last chance to assure the Islands' economic development. I agree that it is a chance that will not recur. But, outside the farming sector, there does not seem to be much self-confidence or initiative

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to build on, and it may take some time before there is a general response to the new opportunities afforded by the post-occupation situation. And although I repeatedly stressed to them the necessity of commitment by the Islanders to the future of their Islands, I think we shall have to take prompt action to improve the level of enterprise and available skills in Port Stanley.

5. A good deal more work needs to be done on possible development projects and much more information is needed about Islander aspirations and the Islands' economic potential. I have encouraged the Civil Commissioner and the Island Councillors to undertake this work and, in particular, to study the likely implications of Lord Shackleton's proposals and to set them in priority with their own suggestions for the future.

6. I have two further comments on the Shackleton Report. I believe that his consideration of the effects of the garrison fails to recognise that the presence of a large number of troops offers the Islanders a new, substantial and consequently changing and comparatively affluent market. They should be encouraged to exploit that market's demand for local produce and souvenirs. I am also concerned that the much higher salaries of imported contract labour will cause widespread local discontent, even if steps are taken to prevent a movement of labour from the land.

7. I have drawn up a commentary on the Shackleton recommendations as I see them after my visit. This is attached as Annex A. I hope that an early decision can be taken to set in hand those that do not involve undue difficulty or expense, since I am anxious that we should be able to show the Islanders and Parliament that we are getting on with it.

8. As for the longer term, it is absolutely clear that the Islanders want no political truck with Buenos Aires, though the more thoughtful of them understand that economic co-existence must be a desirable objective. But they are not in any hurry to discuss any of this in depth, and are content to get on with putting their lives together again under the protection and with the active help of the garrison.



Cranley Onslow

13 October 1982

cc: PUS
Mr Giffard
Mr Ure
FID

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