

Argentine (2)

Prime Minister

A.S.C.B.

FCS/82/183SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCEArgentine Dead on the Falkland Islands

1. We discussed in Cabinet on 28 October ^{Pt 30} what to do about the Argentine dead on the Falklands. You indicated separately to me that in view of the urgency of the problem, to which the Prime Minister drew attention in Cabinet, and as we cannot expect an early answer from the Argentines, you are trying to organise civil contractors to arrange reburial in Stanley.

2. I accept that the chances of the Argentines agreeing to repatriation now are slim. I therefore agree that we must go ahead with the reburial of all the Argentine dead on the Falklands. But I do not think that Stanley is the best place for an Argentine cemetery. They should all be buried together, but preferably in a site well outside the capital. A cemetery in Stanley would be likely to cause resentment among the Islanders and could be contrasted unfavourably with our decision to bury our own dead at San Carlos. It will be important to consult the Civil Commissioner about all this and to get his advice on possible locations.

3. Moreover, I do not think we should close off entirely the possibility of these bodies being repatriated to Argentina. We have no alternative now to burying their dead, but I am keen to keep open means of eliminating the Argentines' locus standi on the Islands that a permanent cemetery entails under the Geneva Convention. This means that, despite the obvious difficulties, those bodies which

/lie in



lie in mass graves would need to be put with the others, and not just concreted over, which I understand your officials have been considering, since such a procedure would preclude subsequent reburial and would also in our view conflict with Article 17 of the First Geneva Convention which obliges us to allow for 'subsequent exhumations and possible transportation to the home country'.

4. We had hitherto refrained from publicity about the Argentine dead. The ICRC were still negotiating with Argentina and it seemed best not to risk jeopardising this process. But these negotiations have got nowhere and I think we should hold back no longer, while being careful to respect ICRC sensitivities. There is just a chance that we might shame the Argentine authorities into agreeing to repatriation.

5. I am sending copies of this minute to the Prime Minister and other members of OD(FAF) and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

(FRANCIS PYM)

Foreign and Commonwealth Office
8 November 1982

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TO PRIORITY UKMIS GENEVA

TELEGRAM NUMBER 383 OF 15 NOVEMBER

AND PRIORITY TO CIVIL COMMISSIONER PORT STANLEY

INFO MODUK (PS/MR WIGGIN)

INFO SAVING BERNE, BRASILIA

ARGENTINE DEAD ON THE FALKLANDS

1. WE BELIEVE THAT WE ARE NOW UNLIKELY TO RECEIVE A POSITIVE ANSWER FROM THE ARGENTINES OVER REPATRIATION OF THEIR DEAD IN THE NEAR FUTURE, IF AT ALL. WE ALSO URGENTLY NEED TO MAKE MORE SATISFACTORY ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE DEAD ON THE ISLANDS WHOM THEY BURIED, OFTEN IN AN UNSATISFACTORY MANNER. WE ARE THEREFORE STARTING TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE REBURIAL OF ALL THE ARGENTINE BODIES. ON THE BASIS OF PRELIMINARY WORK BY THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION (CWGC) THREE SEPARATE SITES ARE ENVISAGED FOR ARGENTINE CEMETERIES: GOOSE GREEN FOR THOSE ALREADY BURIED IN AND AROUND THE SETTLEMENT, ADJACENT TO PORT STANLEY FOR THOSE NOW BURIED INSIDE THE CEMETERY THERE, AND A THIRD ELSEWHERE. ACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS WILL BE MADE BY PRIVATE CONTRACTORS WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE MOD OR CWGC. ALL THE BODIES WOULD BE BURIED IN WOODEN COFFINS AND THE GRAVES MARKED WITH CROSSES (ON THE FRENCH PATTERN AND IN CONTRAST WITH OUR OWN DEAD WHO WILL HAVE HEADSTONES). REBURIAL WILL BE CARRIED OUT WITH DIGNITY ACCORDING TO RC RITES, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IN THE NEW YEAR.
2. PLEASE INFORM THE ICRC OF THE ABOVE AND ASK THEM TO INFORM THE ARGENTINES. YOU SHOULD ALSO ASK THEM TO PASS ON THE MESSAGE THAT OUR OFFER OF REPATRIATION STILL HOLDS GOOD: IF THE ARGENTINES WANT TO TAKE IT UP, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT THEY SHOULD LET US KNOW BEFORE ACTUAL REINTERMENT TAKES PLACE (APART FROM ANYTHING ELSE SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS NEED TO BE MADE FOR COFFINS WHICH ARE BEING TRANSPORTED ANY DISTANCE).

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FOR PORT STANLEY

3. WE UNDERSTAND THAT YOU AND GENERAL THORNE HAVE DISCUSSED THESE ARRANGEMENTS WITH CWGC REPRESENTATIVE AND WE ASSUME THIS WILL BE REFLECTED IN HIS REPORT. WE SHOULD BE GRATEFUL HOWEVER FOR YOUR VIEWS ON SITES FOR ARGENTINE CEMETERIES, TAKING FULL ACCOUNT OF FEELINGS OF THE ISLANDERS. WOULD THERE BE RESERVATIONS ABOUT BURYING ARGENTINE DEAD AT SAN CARLOS, WHICH IS ONE IDEA BEING CONSIDERED BY THE CWGC?

PYM

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