

FALKLAND ISLANDS: FCO SITREP, 0730HRS 16 JUNE

Prisoners of War

1. The Prime Minister announced in the House of Commons that some 15,000 Argentine prisoners of war are now in British hands.
2. Urgent steps are being taken to safeguard these prisoners and to evacuate them as soon as possible from the Islands. A message has been sent to the Argentine Government, via the Swiss, with proposals for their repatriation. A response is still awaited.

Administration

3. The Prime Minister also announced that Mr Rex Hunt and members of the Islands Council at present in this country will return as soon as possible. Mr Hunt will concentrate on civilian matters, General Moore on military matters. They will in effect act as Civil and Military Commissioners.

16 JUNE 1982

EMERGENCY UNIT

FALKLAND ISLANDS : FCO SITREP (DETAILED VERSION)0730 HOURS, 16 JUNE 1982FCO tel 119
to Berne: A

1. There has been no official response so far to our request to the Argentine Government via the Swiss for confirmation of the total cessation of hostilities, of readiness to accept direct repatriation of Argentine POWs to Argentine ports, and to offer safe passage for ships and aircraft used for this purpose.

UKMis tel no
1004: B

2. However, Mrs Kirkpatrick has given Mr Urquhart of the UN Secretariat, quoting 'top Argentine friends', details of a 'deal' allegedly concluded between Argentina and the UK. This looks wildly improbable, involving as it does the absence of any 'surrender ceremony', and the withdrawal of Argentine troops with arms and equipment (except for those taken POW before the final assault). The ending of Argentine air attacks against the task force is also mentioned. Sir A Parsons nevertheless considers that this may provide a clue to the counterproposals which the Argentines may try to put forward in response to our approach via the Swiss.

C

3. An Argentine press agency report, containing details of a purported 'agreement signed for the withdrawal of Argentine soldiers from the Malvinas Islands', looks slightly less far-fetched in that it includes provision for a 'transfer ceremony' (albeit without publicity) and the evacuation of Argentine troops 'on board Argentine ships and planes', without specifying whether these are allowed to retain their weapons.

CTG Signal
151420Z June:D

4. There has been no fresh information overnight regarding the POW situation on the ground. Admiral Woodward's statement yesterday to the embarked press gives a vivid picture of the difficulties which he faces.

FCO Tel no 149
to Brussels:E

5. In response to the instructions to various posts to make representations to friendly Governments about urging the Argentines to accept our proposals on the repatriation of POWs, Sir A Parsons has expressed reluctance to involve the UN Secretary General, arguing that this might open the way for further unwelcome UN involvement. Sir J Bullard agreed that we should reply accepting Sir A Parsons' recommendation that representations should be confined to bilateral approaches to Governments and to the ICRC. In a further message

UKMIS New York
tel 1001: F

about responding to Argentine letters to the Security Council, Sir A Parsons has reiterated his view that our prime objective at the UN for the time being should be to avoid any revival of activity by the Secretary-General or in the Security Council.

UKMis tel no
1003: G

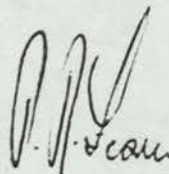
6. Other reactions so far to our representations are summarised in the Annex to this minute.

Comment

7. There are no indications that the Argentines are likely to give a positive reply to our message to them on a cessation of hostilities and repatriation of Argentine forces. Indeed, on the evidence available, it seems more likely that they will be seeking instead for face-saving arrangements in order to present the outcome as a withdrawal rather than a surrender.

8. Sir A Parsons's arguments against involving the UN Secretary General have force. The Brazilian reaction to a possible use of Brazilian ports, though non-committal, is not discouraging and may need now to be followed up more strongly. We still await our Ambassador's view on the possible Uruguayan position. But our Ambassador in Santiago believes that there is a good chance of the Chileans being willing to assist with repatriation through Punta Arenas.

Santiago
telno 297: M



P R Fearn
Emergency Unit

16 June 1981

ANNEX

REACTIONS TO REPRESENTATIONS ABOUT UK PROPOSALS
FOR REPATRIATION OF ARGENTINE POWs

Belgium: Director General MFA told HMA they would 'take
action immediately' (reported by HMA by telephone.)

Copenhagen
tel no 163: H

Denmark: Immediate instructions going to Danish Ambassador
BA to act on 'humanitarian aspects'

Rome tel no
312: I

Italy: Instructions to be sent to Italian Embassy BA
as soon as possible (probably early on 16 June) to
make 'appropriate representations', possibly in
concert with EC missions.

Washington
tel no 2136:J

US: No reactions so far to latest démarche. Secretary
of State Haig confirmed in response to earlier request
that they are studying possibility of help over logistics
of repatriation - also emphasised that no US pressure
on us over 'political follow-up'.

Ottawa tel
no 322: K

Canada: Sympathetic response but Canadians doubt that
any action by them will be productive.

Brasilia tel
no 277: L

Brazil: Brazilians reluctant to intervene beyond their
Protecting Power responsibilities; but studying possibility
of involvement if Argentines block direct repatriation.