



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

29 April 1982

has seen
 Prime Minister NA
 A.F.C. 25/4

Dear John,

Falkland Islanders

In my letter of 26 April I said that officials had reviewed the position of the Falkland Islanders, particularly as regards their morale, and the provision of assistance to those who wanted to leave the Islands temporarily.

Numbers of Falkland Islanders wishing to leave

Our estimates remain the same as in my letter of 26 April. It looks as if a maximum of 300 Falkland Islanders may remain in Port Stanley, but that the great majority are in 'the Camp'. An undetermined number of those in Port Stanley may wish to leave. The large majority of those in 'the Camp' are likely to want to stick it out.

An Argentine aircraft left Port Stanley yesterday for the mainland carrying from 16 to 23 passengers. Most of these will stay overnight in Montevideo and should be flown home to the United Kingdom tomorrow. The usual reception party will be on hand to receive them, de-brief them and look after their welfare. The Chief Secretary of the Falkland Islands will also be at the airport. I shall write to you further about the information we obtain from them.

International Red Cross

The International Red Cross have been trying for some time to persuade the Argentines to give them access to the Islands. We have encouraged them in their efforts, emphasising that we wish them in particular to report on the position of the Islanders, ascertain how many might wish to leave, and consider the ways of enabling them to do so. The ICRC have confirmed that these are among their own highest priorities. After initially turning down the ICRC, the Argentines have now sent them a note indicating that they accepted in principle the ICRC's offer to help over the civilian population, but falling short of agreeing to an early ICRC presence on the Islands. The ICRC are continuing to press for this. We have drawn their attention urgently to the imposition of the Exclusion Zone, indicating that they should re-double their efforts to obtain a presence in the Islands before the zone takes effect.

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We shall of course have to refer to the ICRC's efforts publicly. But the ICRC are concerned that we should not give too much publicity to our contact with them, since this might augment Argentine suspicion that they are in some way acting in collusion with us, and thus defeat their objective.

For the present, we believe an ICRC presence on the Islands represents our best hope of seeing to the welfare of the Islanders. But we have to recognise that the ICRC's efforts may not succeed: and indeed we may need to consider the intervention of a third party to make special arrangements to evacuate those who want to leave. We are in the first place asking our Ambassador in Montevideo to consult the Uruguayans on a personal and contingency basis on whether they would be willing to help, if the need should arise. But the problem will remain, particularly if there is no ICRC presence on the Islands, that we will have no clear means of establishing the demand.

Help for those who want to leave temporarily

HMG will pay the return fares of Islanders who wish to leave temporarily. Steps have been taken to put this into effect. A message has been sent to the Islanders by the BBC, and confirmed by the Prime Minister in the House on 26 April, that the Government would offer very sympathetic help to all those who want to leave temporarily, but are prevented by the lack of means from doing so. It remains our view (and that of the Governor, the Chief Secretary and other prominent returned Islanders) that to make a public announcement that HMG will pay the return fares of Islanders who manage to leave would create consternation among the remaining Islanders; and might build up more pressures for an evacuation than may exist at present, and which we could not at present satisfy.

Morale

The BBC special Service to the Falkland Islands is now operating daily for 35 minutes. The audibility is said to be good, as is the audibility of the BBC's World Service. The Governor spoke on this programme on 26 April, and the Chief Secretary on 27 April. Other prominent returned Islanders will take part on subsequent evenings, the intention being to add a personal and familiar tone to the broadcasts. Any special messages we need to get to the Islanders can best be conveyed to them by this means (as well as the BBC World Service and the telex link which is still operating between the Falkland Islands Company in London and its Manager in the Islands).

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I am sending copies of this letter to Private Secretaries of the other members of OD(SA), to Sir Robert Armstrong and to Sir Michael Palliser.

Yours ever

J E Holmes
(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

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