

78

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

ALW 040/325/12

31 December 1980

R M Hunt Esq CMG  
PORT STANLEY

ALW 040/325/12		
RECEIVED IN REGISTRY NO. 18		
31 DEC 1980		
DESK OFFICER		REGISTRY
INDEX	PA	Action Taken

Dear Rex,

## MR RIDLEY'S VISIT

1. Many thanks for your admirable despatch of 8 December, which is being printed as a Diplomatic Report.
2. It is very helpful, in the midst of the rush of activity here on the Falklands front, to see set out so clearly the background to Mr Ridley's visit and the choices which the Islanders must now face up to. The leaseback idea is now out in the open: and while - as you say - the emotional difficulties are considerable I think we were all impressed by the degree of realism shown by Islanders in their discussion of it. It is only through greater appreciation of the realities of the problem that the Islanders will accept the need for substantive negotiations with the Argentines on the dispute. Mr Ridley's visit has pulled their heads out of the sand; I know that you will be doing all you can to counter their understandable inclination to bury them again.
3. By the time you receive this, we shall probably know Councillors' response to Mr Ridley's proposals. If, as seems inevitable, there is no clear approval of the leaseback idea, it will be vital to keep it on the table for the future. Also, we cannot allow Councillors to shut the door on continuing the dialogue with the Argentines. Were that to happen, we should be in very difficult waters, particularly with the imminent change of the Argentine Government. You should discourage any hope that the problem will go away when Videla's Government leaves office; if anything, we would expect their successors to be more hard-line.
4. Your role in the coming months will be both difficult and important. We must avoid any appearance of pressure on the Islanders. But they will continue to need firm guidance if they are to develop an understanding of the full complexities of the problem. It looks set to be a long haul. But if at the end of the day we can lift the dead hand of the dispute, then it will have been worthwhile. Overall despite the immediate difficulties both here and in the Islands, a good start has been made.

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77

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5. Finally, we are all most grateful for the excellent programme which you arranged for Mr Ridley and for your very positive and helpful part in steering discussions throughout a most active week of debate.

*Your ever  
P R Fearn*

P R Fearn  
South America Dept.

cc  
A J Williams Esq CMG  
BUENOS AIRES

Also thank you for Mr Ridley's letter. I am very grateful to be invited to lunch. I am probably the first Minister to be invited to lunch. Also thank you for Mr Ridley's letter. I am very grateful to be invited to lunch. I am probably the first Minister to be invited to lunch.

With renewed thanks and best wishes to you both.

*The Secretary  
Home Office*