

# LOBBY BRIEFING

time: 4.00 PM date: 6.4.82

The morning Lobby was repeated.

We said that Cabinet had lasted 1 hour 45 minutes. We reported that Cabinet paid tribute to Lord Carrington and welcomed the two new Ministers.

We drew attention to a Written PQ answered by Mr Rees of the Department of Trade at 3.30 pm which gave effect to a total ban on the import of Argentine goods by British firms effective from midnight. The only exception would be imports at sea and en route. This ban was effected by an amendment to the Open General Import License under the Import of Goods (Control) Order 1954.

On appointments we said we hoped to announce some time after 6 pm the further Government changes resulting from yesterday's moves.

On the Prime Minister's diary, we said that the visit by Mr Adelson had been cancelled because the Prime Minister was still working on the Government changes. We also confirmed that the Prime Minister was not now visiting Loughborough the following day.

We thought suggestions that Mr Pym would open and Mr Nott would close in Wednesday's debate seemed reasonable, but thought the Prime Minister would not speak. We agreed that if Mr Foot decided to speak that might change the situation.

The Prime Minister had not seen The Queen and we knew of no plans for an audience this week.

Asked about resignations/dismissals among diplomats, we said we knew of none.

Asked about effects on the recess, we said that we thought this would go ahead - the House could always be recalled if necessary.

We could neither confirm nor deny offers by Chile of facilities and naval bases.

Asked if the further Ministerial changes would be confined to consequential moves, we said that this was certainly not a Ministerial reconstruction and we thought the announcement on moves today would complete the picture. We did not necessarily believe there would be two Foreign Office Ministers in the Cabinet nor would the Deputy Foreign Minister necessarily be in the Lords though there was always a Foreign Office spokesman in the Lords.

The Lobby suggested there was no optimism about a diplomatic solution. We said there was no particular reason to be optimistic on this score. The world was offering its support. We again emphasised the UN Resolution, the remarks by Mr Muldoon and the meeting of EC permanent representatives today. All of this contributed to diplomatic pressure. We repeated the Prime Minister's remarks about a UN Resolution on sanctions. We agreed that obviously we would hope that imports that we ban would not leak in through the EC. Asked about parallels with the tighter "trade ban" on Rhodesia, we said all options were being considered.

We saw no contradiction in statements made on intelligence and timing of moves towards invasion by the Prime Minister, Lord Carrington, Mr Nott and Mr Luce. Asked about dispositions made earlier than the present task force had departed, we acknowledged, as Mr Nott had previously, that some ships had already put to sea earlier.

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Questioned about the conspiracy theory that someone in the Foreign Office knew more than they had revealed to Ministers - stories which were said to be coming from MPs - we said that in events such as these there were always conspiracy theories.

In response to further questions about intelligence, timing and knowledge etc, we pointed to a widespread refusal to face up to the facts of the situation and the geography. On ships, we emphasised that the real challenge had always been acknowledged to come from the Soviet Union and the primary weight in the Armed Forces had to reflect this emphasis. There was a refusal by some people to accept that we could not have a permanent fleet in the South Atlantic. It was also important to realise that the UK was a considerable distance from the Falklands. Events had also shown that HMS Endurance was not a key factor in defending the Falklands and we would not agree with the point that the decision to withdraw the ship had shown the Argentines that we did not have any real heart in the Falklands.

Asked what would happen after the Falkland Islands had been restored and how they would then be protected, we suggested the Lobby should wait and see. No doubt in the meantime the large number of armchair strategists would have much to say and much advice to give on how to fight the battle, how to run the colony afterwards, and how to protect it.

Asked why the Defence White Paper was delayed, we said it had never been the intention to produce it before Easter. The only reason it might slip from its present date would be pure pressure of business on the MoD as a result of events.

On the question of the World Cup, we repeated that the Government's policy on sportsmen was well known, and there had been no communication from World Cup bodies to the Government so far as we knew.

We knew of no intention to produce a White Paper on the Falkland Islands situation and how it arose. The Government was concentrating on the matter in hand.

Cabinet had not been devoted entirely to the Falkland Islands issue although that had obviously been the dominant subject.

On the Prime Minister's plans for Easter, we said these were left open for the moment.

Asked about our diplomatic representation, we said that a British interest section had been established at the Swiss Embassy in Buenos Aires.

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