

20 April 1982

NOTE TO PRESS OFFICERS

FALKLAND ISLANDS

You may find the following two answers given by Mr Pym yesterday to supplementaries useful.

United Nations

Sir Nigel Fisher (Surbiton): Will my right hon. Friend keep an open mind about the suggestion of a United Nations presence? If that were offered by the United Nations, it might be the very factor to induce the Argentines to withdraw peaceably. With a United Nations presence, a referendum of the Falkland Islanders could take place, and we all know the probable result of that. That would be a good interim measure.

Mr. Pym: I note that suggestion. During the negotiations, I should not wish to close any options beyond the objectives and principles that we have stated. However, in the course of these long talks we have explored a great many options and there are difficulties about most of them. Therefore, that is not necessarily a way ahead. At present, we must just hope that the present negotiations will, in one way or another, be successful.

Evacuation of the Islanders

Mr. George Cunningham (Islington, South and Finsbury): Are the Falkland Islanders free to leave the islands if they wish to do so? Are they free in practice to do so, as opposed to what the Argentines say about this? If they are, would it not be right for the British Government to say at this stage that if they do leave temporarily they will assist them to do so, so that they can get out of the combat zone?

Mr. Pym: There is no evidence that Falkland Islanders who wish to leave the islands are being prevented from doing so by Argentina. The hon. Gentleman's second point is one that we are considering sympathetically.