

NOTE TO PRESS OFFICERS

Falklands

Argentines on South Georgia : Prisoners of War Question

The four Geneva Conventions in 1949 apply not only to war but armed conflict between two States and all cases of partial or total occupation of territory. Geneva conventions have thus applied to the Falklands since 2 April.

The Argentine soldiers therefore captured by the British on South Georgia are Prisoners of War and will be dealt with in accordance with the Geneva Conventions.

Civilian Detainees

The civilians whose presence on South Georgia was illegal have been detained and are to be returned to Argentina.

Q: I am sure that it is right and humane in these circumstances to return prisoners of war to the Argentine. Can my Rt Hon Friend say, can give us some assurance, that if any difficulty over this arises that names and state of health of such men is made known to their anxious relatives in sharp contrast to the inhumane treatment by the fascist junta of the relatives of thousands of Argentinians who disappeared in recent years, many of whom are now dead?

A: Mr Speaker, can I make one point clear, these prisoners are not prisoners of war; a state of war does not exist between ourselves and the Argentine. They are prisoners; they will be returned as soon as possible. Of course we will let their names and state of health be known to their relatives as soon as possible but I understand the Commander of the Argentine Forces is already very grateful for the very quick medical attention that was given to one Argentinian marine who was badly hurt.