

LOBBY BRIEFING

time: 4 PM

date: 10.5.82

Has been distributed N.H.

The morning Lobby was repeated.

MALDIVES

At the lunch following the talks between the Prime Minister and the President, President Gayoom of the Maldives announced that he would be seeking special membership of the Commonwealth.

TRADE FIGURES

£654m surplus.

PQs

4.30 pm: John Major asking DHSS on take-home pay for nurses and DHSS ancillary workers.

PRESS NOTICE

Four o'clock, Department of Industry, EC Commission approval of £18m for development of new employment opportunities in steel closure areas.

The Prime Minister to meet French Prime Minister, M Mauroy, in Edinburgh on Saturday and attend Franco-British Council dinner. Asked if the Prime Minister would definitely go to Edinburgh irrespective of Falklands developments, we said that as of now it was her intention to do so but, depending on events, her plans might be altered. This was always a possibility.

FALKLANDS

The UNSG had two meetings each day on Saturday and Sunday with our representative and the Argentine representative. He was still synthesising each side's position in order to put flesh on the bone of the UN framework. So far the UNSG had not presented any paper. We had no reason for optimism although some progress had been made. This process was clearing the way before coming to any crunch points on the main issues. Costa Mendez had muddied the waters. There was no problem on a ceasefire; the difficulty was linking it with Argentine withdrawal.

Asked about paramouncy, we pointed out that it was UN language. It was a question of the Islanders' wishes but we were not in a position to take account of them at this stage. Paramouncy could not be compared with a veto.

Asked about whether South Georgia was included in the negotiations, we said it was a quite separate issue; it was not part of the negotiations.

Asked about a long seige, we said that it was an option. But the Government was not disposed to be shunted into a siding for any length of time, particularly in view of the earlier negotiations that had taken place. We would not be drawn on whether an invasion might take place in weeks or months.

Today's meeting of Ministers had considered the diplomatic and military positions. There would be a stocktaking Cabinet tomorrow.

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We informed the Lobby of the two MoD announcements concerning the sinking of HMS Sheffield and the imposition of an area of controlled air space around Ascension Island.

Media

We assumed that media coverage had been discussed at today's meeting. Naturally we were anxious to get pictures and information for publication and that information should be released more quickly. There were problems in verifying reports and unfortunately in some cases next of kin had to be contacted. We fully appreciated the problems and the feelings of the Lobby; we were talking to the MoD about this and hoped that there would be some improvement.

EC

We had not expected a decision on renewal of sanctions at the weekend Foreign Ministers' meeting. Naturally people were concerned at any escalation of hostilities but we did not know of any problems concerning renewal. The Irish did not suggest these measures be dropped. The Community would take a political decision next weekend and if the present circumstances remained, we fully expected the measures to be renewed.

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