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NOTE OF A MEETING HELD IN THE PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE AT 5.00 pm ON WEDNESDAY 19 MAY 1982

Present: Rt Hon Cecil Parkinson MP Chancellor of the Duchy litary and diplomatic act of Lancaster and thankle and North America, Paymaster General Cranley Onslow MP Minister of State, in case minor incoversely resemble Foreign and Commonwhat they said and office wealth Office Sir Frank Cooper Ministry of Defence R L Wade-Gery)
D Colvin) Cabinet Office B Ingham No 10 Press Office South Atlantic Presentation Unit S W J Fuller R P Hatfield Lord Nicholas Gordon Lennox) Foreign and Commonwealth N M Fenn) Office H H Mills Chancellor of the Duchy's Bouth Atlantic and North America on Office wich day

- The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said that OD(SA) had asked him to consider how the public presentation of the Government's position in the Falkland crisis might be improved. While it was not his intention to set up new machinery which would interfere with, or duplicate, existing arrangements, there were three areas where his involvement might usefully supplement the daily meetings of Mr Ingham's group. First, if a particular difficulty about publicity was identified at Mr Ingham's meeting or elsewhere, he could contact the Minister or senior official concerned to resolve the difficulty. Secondly, it would be useful to plan publicity for the week ahead, anticipating, if possible, events. Thirdly, he saw a need to ensure that Ministers were available for TV and radio.
- In discussion, the following main points were made:-
 - It was difficult to plan publicity for the future. On both the diplomatic and military fronts, any plans were likely to be displaced by the responses to actual events. Nevertheless, MoD and FCO considered in advance the publicity implications of likely events. In addition, MoD had held briefing sessions with Defence Correspondents, Editors and NATO partners.

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- There were particular difficulties about releasing (b) information about casualties.
 - The demands of the media for interviews with Ministers (c) were often unrealistic and there were difficulties for some programmes arising from the time differences between military and diplomatic action in the South Atlantic and North America, Ministerial consideration in OD(SA) and Cabinet and the actual time of broadcast. Some Ministers were reluctant to undertake interviews in case minor inadvertent textual differences between what they said and official statements gave rise to speculation about differences of view within the Government and became newsworthy in their own right.
 - (d) The crisis, now in its seventh week, was placing a considerable burden on the press officers in MoD, FCO and No 10 and additional resources were required. Some spare capacity in SAPU might be used to ease the burden.

There was a need for greater coordination between FCO and MoD on briefing material to be made available overseas.

- To now get sitreps; (e) and we always do (e) spend reports a request (eq. for Parsons). The scheduling of meetings of OD(SA) at 9.30 am, so that Ministers could be briefed on events in the South Atlantic and North America on the previous day and respond to them, did not fit well with the longstanding arrangements for lobby briefing. This meant that Ministerial discussion and the preparation for lobby briefing at Mr Ingham's meeting took place separately. There was a need to ensure that Ministers were aware of the publicity implications of events and the options before them.
 - The proposed arrangements for the publication of a White Paper 3. on the following day were outlined and suggestions for presentation and publicity were made.
 - The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said that the meeting had been useful and suggested that similar meetings should be held weekly. He invited Mr Ingham to bring forward proposals for strengthening press resources in the Departments concerned. To strengthen the links between OD(SA) and Mr Ingham's group, he asked Mr Fuller to report to him as necessary.
 - The next meeting was arranged for Monday 24 May at 6.00 pm in the Chancellor of the Duchy's Office.

MHH 24 May 1982