

Tories uneasy over Pym's attitude

By Julian Haviland, Political Editor

Mr Francis Pym, the Foreign Secretary, is likely to find himself facing a nervous Conservative Party today when he opens the fifth full debate in the Commons on the Falkland Islands since they were invaded by Argentina on April 2.

Many who think highly of his judgment have been openly voicing doubts that in his willingness to go the second mile to reach a negotiated settlement he may be prepared to give more away than the country's interests and the Government's standing allow.

Officers of the Conservative backbench foreign affairs committee have told him of this anxiety. In particular, they objected to the Government's readiness, revealed last week, to accept the Peruvian plan for interim administration of the islands, after an Argentine withdrawal, by four countries acceptable to Argentina as well as to Britain.

There would have been no British Governor and an obligation only to consult the islanders' elected legislative council; something much less, in the party's view, than the "recognizably British administration" on which the Prime Minister has previously insisted.

Mr Pym took the point at once assuring them that Argentina's rejection of this plan had killed it and that it was no longer on offer. He invited them to repeat his words to other Conservative MPs.

After yesterday's meeting

of the inner Cabinet which again considered a report from the British representative at the United Nations, Mr Pym approached the cameras in Downing Street to announce developments overnight which hold out some promise of progress" though he added that many difficult problems remained and that hopes had been raised and dashed several times before.

Mr Denis Healey, Labour's deputy leader, who will speak in today's debate, told Labour MPs yesterday that there was a struggle in the Cabinet between those who wanted a peaceful settlement and those who wanted to use force with Mrs Thatcher "the leading hawk."

Another Shadow minister, Mr Peter Shore, spoke strongly in support of the British case before an American audience in London yesterday. Labour policy was in no circumstances he said, to accept the handover of the Falklands against the will of their inhabitants to Argentina.

At stake was not British but Argentine colonialism and expansion. Since April 2 every British Falkland Islander had, against his will, been subject to the alien, coercive and colonial power of Argentina.

● Whitehall officials said last night that although some progress had been made in the negotiations at the United Nations, some very difficult problems lay ahead

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