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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

17/21
16 April 1982

Dear David,

South Georgia

You will be aware that at the time when Grytviken, South Georgia, was occupied by the Argentines, there were on the island, as well as the 22 Royal Marines, 26 British Antarctic Survey (BAS) personnel, and two girls, Misses Cindy Buxton and Annie Price, who were making a wild-life film for the Anglia Television "Survival" series. Our understanding is that the 13 BAS personnel at Grytviken and the 22 captured Marines are being returned to Argentina by ship and may already have arrived there.

The remaining 13 BAS men and Misses Buxton and Price are still on South Georgia in four separate parties. Winter is coming on and although none of the parties are at risk for some while yet, we, and of course their next-of-kin, are naturally concerned about their future. Lord Buxton, Cindy's father, has written a letter to Mr Pym (copy attached) which, although perhaps unnecessarily alarmist, illustrates the sort of pressure we shall be under if we cannot give some sort of firm assurance as to what we are going to do about these people.

The present situation is that Sir Hermann Bondi, Chairman of the Natural Environment Research Council and owner of the BAS vessel Bransfield, is adamant that, although she was yesterday some 300 miles east of South Georgia steaming northwards, she should not be committed to entering the Argentine declared War Zone. I think your people agree with this and we would certainly not wish to dissent.

As I think you know, we have told the Argentines, through the Swiss, where these people are and who they are, and have asked the Argentines whether they plan to take them off the island and repatriate them. We have had no response and it now seems increasingly unlikely that the Argentines will do anything about them. This brings us to the Task Force.

/Could I ask

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Could I ask you to consider what can be done about this once the Task Force arrives in the area and let me know? I should just add that if there is a diplomatic solution, we shall need to consider, in consultation with Dick Laws, Director of BAS, whether some of the BAS men should remain in order to maintain a British presence on the island.

I attach a detailed breakdown of who is where on South Georgia.

Yours ever

John Holmes

(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

David Omand Esq
PS/Secretary of State for Defence

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Personal and Immediate

15 April 1982

The Rt. Hon. Francis Pym, MC, DL
Secretary of State
Foreign & Commonwealth Office
Downing Street
London, SW1

Handwritten notes:
15 April 1982
In his hand
New Dept
News Dept
JPH 15/4

Dear Francis,

I am writing on behalf of the handful of British subjects stranded in South Georgia. Because Cindy is among them, I am being pressed by the parents and families involved to make immediate representations to you on everyone's behalf.

As I was there on the spot less than a month ago, I feel qualified to give you an informed view. I believe it would be dangerous not to seize the present opportunity, if there is no clear danger of immediate conflict in South Georgia, of taking the stranded parties off by helicopter and transferring them to RRS Bransfield right now while the going is good.

Bransfield is in the right position today, but I understand will then become more remote, so that is another opportunity which may be missed.

Even if there is an Argentine element at Grytviken or Leith, it should be possible to lift the groups from St. Andrew's Bay, Lyell Glacier, Schlieper Bay and Bird Island, without anybody seeing or knowing anything about it.

If they are left "until the coast is clear" and we had failed to seize the chance when it existed, it would surely look extremely bad for the Government and it could be serious for the individuals concerned.

Don't be misled by advice that they have 3 months' supplies. Winter is coming on and they could soon be under several feet of snow, in sub-zero temperatures and difficult to rescue because of ice conditions. Several are in tents or worse. People can die with unlimited supplies.

If the situation did become worse, and a clear chance of rescue had been missed, there would I believe be an outcry, and it would be frightful if they were taken captive by Argentina in a prolonged situation, a reasonable and fair chance of rescue having been passed over for tactical reasons.

15 April 1982

May I urge you on behalf of all the families concerned to give this immediate and compassionate consideration before things might get more difficult. Please forgive me for not signing this letter, but I returned to Norfolk late last night after speaking in the Debate.

Yours ever,

pp. Aubrey

BUXTON

BRITISH ANTARCTIC SURVEY PARTIES IN SOUTH GEORGIA

BIRD ISLAND, 54°00'S., -38°03'W., off the NW tip of South Georgia

Party:
P. Copestake
B. Wheeler
J. Hector
P. Humphries (4)

SCHLIEPER BAY, 54°03'S., 37°50'W., close to N. end of South Georgia, between Romerof Head and Weddell Point

Party:
P. Martin
B. Doidge (Canadian citizen) (2)

ST ANDREWS BAY, 54°26'S., 36°10'W., SE of Cumberland Bay on NE coast of South Georgia

Party:
T. North
M. Plant
P. Stark
Miss Lucinda Buxton
Miss Annie Price (5)

LYELL GLACIER, 54°19'S., 36°37'W., flows in to Cumberland West Bay

Party:
C. Gemmell
I. Barker
T. Edwards
D. Sanders (4)

MINISTERIAL BUSINESS: TO BE GIVEN PRIORITY AT ALL TIMES

CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL

MF 37

PRIVATE OFFICE REFERENCE: Mo 5/21

Hd 7 DS 11

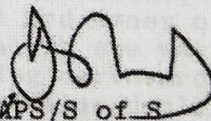
SOUTH GEORGIA

MINISTERIAL BUSINESS: TO BE GIVEN PRIORITY AT ALL TIMES

1. In consultation with the other Directorates or Divisions concerned, please advise the Secretary of State, with a draft as necessary, on the attached communication from PS / FUS dated 16 April.
2. Please submit advice by ~~not later than~~ no mp
3. The attachment must be placed on a Departmental registered file.
4. I am copying this minute, with the attachment, to:

- PSO / CDS
- DS 5. Duty Officer
- PS / PMS
- Sec / CNS
- ASO S (Ops)
- D Ops. Row
- DS 11 Duty Officer

Date: 18 April 82


APS/S of S
MB 2111/3

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