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23MAR82 – HoC. Exposición Luce y preguntas.

(PREM 19/613) (desclasificado DIC 2012) más (Margaret Thatcher Foundation) (desclasificado 2013)

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✓ Per Office
MAP
Argentina



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

23 March 1982

23.
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Dear John,

b.c.

Falkland Islands

I enclose a copy of the statement Mr Luce proposes to make in the House today, subject to the views of Lord Carrington who is being consulted in Brussels. The statement will be repeated by Lord Trefgarne in the Lords. In response to questions about the precise arrangements we are making, Mr Luce proposes to say no more than that HMS Endurance is in the area and will be available to assist if necessary.

Yours ever

(J E Holmes)
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing St

South Georgia~~FALKLAND ISLANDS: ILLEGAL LANDING ON SOUTH GEORGIA.~~

12. We were informed on 20 March by the Commander of the British Antarctic Base at Grytviken on South Georgia that a party of Argentines had made a landing at Leith Harbour nearby. The Base Commander informed the Argentine party that their presence was illegal as they had not obtained his prior authority for the landing. We immediately took the matter up with the Argentine authorities in Buenos Aires and the Argentine Embassy in London and, following our approach, the ship and most of the personnel left on 21 March. However, the Base Commander has reported that a small number of men and some equipment remain. We are therefore making arrangements to ensure ~~that they~~ *their* leave soon. *early departure*

SOUTH GEORGIA

TO BE CHECKED
AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr Speaker,

 permission
I will with / make a brief statement on
developments in South Georgia, a Falkland Islands
Dependency.

We were informed on 20 March by the Commander of the British Antarctic Survey Base at Grytviken on South Georgia that a party of Argentines had made a landing at Leith Harbour nearby. The Base Commander informed the Argentine party that their presence was illegal as they had not obtained his prior authority for the landing. We immediately took the matter up with the Argentine authorities in Buenos Aires and the Argentine Embassy in London and, following our approach, the ship and most of the personnel left on 21 March. However, the Base Commander has reported that a small number of men and some equipment remain. We are therefore making arrangements to ensure their early departure.

REFERENCES

A: House of Commons. 23 March 1982.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

1. Are the men still there?

My latest information is that they are.

2. When will they leave?

Shortly.

3. How?

Appropriate action is in hand.

4. Are you not over-reacting?

The presence of these men on British territory without our authorisation is a breach of our regulations and an infringement of our sovereignty. We have no wish to portray a few workmen as an invasion threat; but we ^{are making arrangements} cannot allow ~~them to remain.~~ ^{to ensure their safe departure.}

5. Argentine reaction?

We have made clear to the Argentines that this situation is not of our seeking. Our hope is that this regrettable incident can be resolved with the least possible consequences for our political relations.

6. Will you now end the illegal occupation of Southern Thule?

As the House knows, we have repeatedly protested to the Argentine Government about the illegal station on Southern Thule. Our legal position is fully protected. We have also made it clear to the Argentines, most recently at the talks with them in February in New York, that their

/continued

*2 yrs ago -
small party -
to it then now
there*

?

continued presence on Southern Thule prejudices the climate for discussion on the wider sovereignty issue. We take this matter very seriously.

7. Do the Argentines claim the Dependencies?

Argentina has explicitly claimed sovereignty over South Georgia for more than 50 years and over the South Sandwich Islands (of which Southern Thule is one) for more than 30 years. We have no doubts about British sovereignty over the Falkland Islands Dependencies.

The Ministry of Defence instruct HMS Endeavour to prepare to sail to South Georgia with a detachment of Marines from Port Stanley.

HM Ambassador Buenos Aires informs the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs that we are treating the infringement of our sovereignty very seriously. The Argentine Charge d'Affaires is called in to the Foreign Office and told the same. The Argentine Government protest ignored but again as to the matter of priority.

11 March: HMS Endeavour departs for South Georgia.

Argentine DFA advise us that the ship will leave South Georgia shortly and that no services personnel are involved.

12 March: We receive confirmation that the ship has left but there are doubts about whether all the services personnel are involved.

HM Ambassador Buenos Aires states on 12 March.

In the evening, DFA confirm that about 100 personnel are involved.

13 March: HMS Endeavour is instructed to sail on for South

PRIME MINISTER

Falkland Islands

Mr. Luce's brief statement led to some tough questioning from both sides of the House.

Denis Healey wanted confirmed that an Argentine flag had been raised, and sought more information about the state of discussions with the Argentine Government. He wanted to know whether the landing had occurred with the support or knowledge of that Government. Mr. Luce reported that the Argentines had denied this, but he pointed out that the vessel was a naval transport, albeit on hire for civilian purposes.

Bernard Braine warned against over-reaction, but stressed the need to ensure the morale of the Falkland islanders, which could not be achieved by the withdrawal of the tangible support represented by HMS Endurance. Alan Beith wanted a renewed Government statement that self-determination was the corner-stone of British policy. Mr. Callaghan reminded Mr. Luce that he had been warned about the risk of this kind of activity. He sought an immediate statement that Endurance would not be withdrawn. Nicholas Winterton described the action as tantamount to an invasion. He sought an assurance that Endurance or a similar vessel would remain on station. Mr. Healey rose a third time to suggest that, with the Endurance withdrawal settled, the Government's only remaining option was to persuade the Australians to allow Invincible to make a detour around the Falkland Islands en route for its new life. Eric Ogden, who had recently visited the Falklands, argued passionately that MOD and FCO Ministers played a game with the House in evading questions. John Blackburn sought "a covenant with the House and the country that sovereignty would not be an agenda item for discussion with any foreign power". Michael Morris, John Stokes and Douglas Jay joined in on similar lines.

In response to all this, Mr. Luce confirmed that the wishes of the islanders would be paramount; that nothing would be done without the consent of the House; and that it was Britain's duty

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to defend and support the islanders to the best of our ability, although the detailed dispositions were matters for Defence Ministers. He did later confirm that we had a marine garrison in addition to HMS Endurance. He also reported that we were taking firm action to ensure that those who remained on South Georgia would leave, and that Endurance was in a position to assist with this. In reply to Mr. Blackburn's call for a covenant, Mr. Luce reiterated that we were convinced of our sovereignty but that Argentine claimed sovereignty. There had to be discussions, but there could not be sensible discussion against a background of threats.

MAP

23 March 1982

FALKLANDS

LINE TO TAKE

A

My Hon Friend the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Mr Luce) made a statement to the House on 23 March. I have nothing to add to that.

It is our duty to support and defend the islanders to the best of our ability. That we shall do.

The presence of those men on British territory without our authorisation is a breach of our regulations and an infringement of our sovereignty. We have no wish to see a further increase of an invasion force, but we cannot allow them to remain.

3. Argentine reaction

We have made clear to the Argentine that this situation is not of our seeking. Our hope is that this regrettable incident can be resolved with the least possible consequences for our political relations.

4. Will you see and the illegal occupation of Southern Islands

In the House today, we have repeatedly pointed to the Argentine Government about the illegal occupation of Southern Islands. Our legal position is fully protected. We have also made it clear to the Argentines, most recently at the talks with them in New York, that their

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