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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

22 April, 1982

Dear Mr. Needham

Thank you for calling on 15 April to give me an account of your contacts with the Falkland Islands over the past few days. This was a great help to me in keeping abreast of developments there. I am returning to you the telex messages which you showed me. We are, of course, treating them in strict confidence.

You suggested that you might pass messages back to your employees and their dependants on the Islands about evacuation. This must be a matter for you and your company. We have noted that a large number of Islanders who normally live in Port Stanley have been permitted to leave for the countryside ('the camp') where they will presumably be safer in the event of any hostilities. There is conflicting evidence about how many of the Islanders wish to leave now and it seems no general pattern has yet emerged. Indeed, it is likely to remain essentially a personal decision for individuals. There is no machinery through which the Islanders can express their collective views as long as the Islands remain under Argentine occupation. We remain doubtful in any case whether the Argentine authorities would themselves permit any general evacuation of the Islands by the British inhabitants.

However, I do feel strongly that anyone who wishes to leave should not be prevented from doing so by financial circumstances. We have therefore given some thought to this aspect of the problem. At present we understand that most of those who have left have been deported by the Argentine authorities without charge; nor do we

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anticipate that there would be problems for Islanders if required to pay for their passage to the Argentine mainland since Falklands Islands currency still appears to be valid on the Islands. We recognise however that there are very real problems for those Islanders who reach Montevideo and wish to continue their journey back to the United Kingdom. We have therefore instructed our Embassy at Montevideo to give sympathetic help under our normal rules to any Islanders who are in this position. They may be sure that no-one will be left stranded there for want of funds.

Equally we understand that most Islanders who might return to the UK would have family, friends or employers (such as your own company) to help them in any temporary settlement problems here. As I told you, the Home Office will adopt a cooperative attitude towards immigration problems for any Falkland Islanders who do not have right of abode in the UK, and the social services would also lend full and sympathetic assistance in meeting the immediate needs of Islanders who arrive here.

I hope you will keep in touch with us about developments on the Islands and anything further you may learn about conditions there and the intentions of the Islanders. I am - as you know - determined to stand by them in the difficulties, dangers and anxieties that are facing them in the days ahead.

Yours sincerely
Margaret Heseltine

C.E. Needham, Esq.