

CONFIDENTIAL.

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Prime Minister

Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Agree the attached
comment to the press?

A.J.C. 28/10

See amendment
not

28 October 1983

Dear John, Copy: Mr. Ingram.

Reaction to the Elections in Argentina

We shall be pressed to make some comment on the elections due to be held in Argentina on 30 October, whatever their result. Quite apart from the Falklands dimension, these are the first elections to be held in Argentina since 1973. The country has been under military rule since 1976.

The official British reaction will be very carefully scrutinised in Buenos Aires and elsewhere. The Foreign Secretary has no doubt that the general state of our relations with Argentina does not warrant such a gesture as sending any message through one of the Protecting Powers to the Argentine politicians who are successful in the elections. Sir Geoffrey feels that we should use the occasion, without showing undue warmth or raising the hope of any change in our position on sovereignty over the Falklands, to show that we are not indifferent to the fact that elections are being held in Argentina. It could be helpful to us tactically at the United Nations and among the Ten to make this clear. The occasion also provides an opening to encourage the new Argentine Government to adopt more constructive policies than those of the present Junta. I enclose a suggested draft of our statement. You will see that this is a comment on the electoral process rather than its result: because of the complicated system of Electoral Colleges, the Presidential result may not be clear until quite late in November, although the composition of the new Congress should be apparent before then.

Sir Geoffrey considers that we should be very careful not to create exaggerated expectations of movement in our Falklands policy (or theirs) as a result of the Argentine elections, and considers that this will be more easily achieved if we omit any reference to the Islands in our statement. But we are likely to be pressed and we have therefore suggested a contingency line drawing attention to the Falkland Islanders' right also to live under a Government of their own choosing.

Within the Ten, there has been an initiative by the Greek Presidency, supported by some others, for a statement welcoming the elections and also containing quite strong language about human rights in Argentina. We have accepted the principle of a statement by the Ten and shall ensure that it is not inconsistent with the British position. We have proposed that it should include a reference to the need for observance of human rights and the rule of law in Argentina.

I am copying this letter to Richard Hatfield (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,

(P F Ricketts)
Private Secretary

Peter Ricketts

A J Coles Esq
10 Downing Street

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ARGENTINE ELECTIONS:

BRITISH STATEMENT

1. We welcome this step towards the restoration of democracy in Argentina.

2. We hope that as a first step [?] the new government will be more inclined to respond positively to the ideas we have put forward to secure the restoration of normal commercial and economic relations between our two countries. This is the only realistic way towards the restoration of confidence between us.

[If pressed on sovereignty]

3. We hope that a democratically elected Argentine Government will recognise the Falkland Islanders' right also to live under a government of their own choosing.

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1 November 1983

Reaction to the Elections in Argentina

For the record, I should confirm (as I told you on the telephone some time ago) that the Prime Minister was content with the press line enclosed with your letter of 28 October, subject to the deletion of the words "as a first step" in paragraph 2.

JOHN COLES

Peter Ricketts, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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