

Falkland Islands NEWS

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Britain's new North Sea

Falkland Islands Day, June 19 1979, celebrated just nine days after the 'Malvinas Day' ritual in Argentina, gives an opportunity to review the needs and the wishes of the Falkland Islanders - and of Britain.

The Falkland Islanders are determined to remain British - but they look forward to increasing cooperation with Argentina in the development of the South West Atlantic in the interests of the Falkland Islands, of Argentina and of Britain in two sectors: fishing and the possibility of finding oil in commercial quantities.

The Islanders are optimistic about the future development of their internal resources on the lines indicated in Lord Shackleton's Report and are looking now for a comprehensive development of all the resources of the Islands and the seas around them.

The first need is a modern infrastructure - as indicated by Lord Shackleton. The Islands cannot develop without modern air communications - a full length runway such as that in the Shetland Islands being a priority.

The Islands need port facilities, using the excellent natural harbour of Port William. Bulk refrigerated handling facilities for fish and meat and processing plants must be established.

An adequate road system must be built and ferries and inter-island shipping must be improved, as also must the telecommunication system.

A 200-mile economic zone, with an agreed median line, should now

be declared and the conservation and management of sea fisheries undertaken.

These developments would lead to the Islands becoming an international fishing entrepot port and base. The Polish fleet already uses them and the Islanders hope that the British fishing fleet will do so too.

The possibility of a sea link with St Helena is being examined which would solve both the problem of labour shortage in the Islands and of unemployment on St Helena.

An alginate trade worth £10M plus per annum could be developed, as could a chilled mutton and beef trade. Trout and salmon could be farmed on a commercial scale - a plan which is now being investigated.

An international scientific centre for the study of the massive resources of the South Atlantic should be established in the Islands.

The development of deep-sea fisheries, alginates and possibly oil would be of direct benefit to the British economy but the Islanders present aim is to raise the quality of life in the Islands and to see the population, now 1,850, grow.

They aim to do this by a partnership between government, people and private industry.

They look forward to help from the British government.

They seek private investment from Britain and other EEC countries.

In the seas around the Islands they look forward to cooperation with Argentina.

For further information please contact the Falkland Islands Office 2 Greycoat Place, S W 1 Tel: 01 222 0028 / 1871

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Written Answers

25 MAY 1979

OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

Falkland Islands

Mr. Blackburn asked the Lord Privy Seal whether he will take positive action to retain British sovereignty of the Falkland Islands in the face of continued Argentine claims.

Sir Ian Gilmour: Successive British Governments have left the Argentine Government in no doubt as to British sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and their Dependencies.

Mr. Blackburn asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will implement the economic development of the Falkland Islands in accordance with the report of Lord Shackleton in 1976.

Sir Ian Gilmour: The majority of the recommendations put forward by Lord Shackleton in his economic survey of the Falkland Islands have now been implemented. The Government will continue to maintain a close interest in the development of the Falkland Islands.

Mr. Blackburn asked the Lord Privy Seal if he will make an early policy statement in respect of the Falkland Islands.

Sir Ian Gilmour: We are looking closely at the problems of the Falkland Islands but no change of policy is currently planned. The House will be kept informed of all developments of interest.

NOTE TO READERS

An analysis of the developments which have taken place in the Falkland Islands following Lord Shackleton's 1976 400-page "ECONOMIC SURVEY OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS" is available on request from the Falkland Islands Office, at the above address.

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14. Mr. McCrindle asked the Lord Privy Seal if he plans to review United Kingdom diplomatic representation in Argentina and Chile.

Mr. Hurd: Argentina and Chile are separate cases, but we are now actively considering the level of our relations with both countries. We shall, of course, inform the House of any decision.

HOUSE OF LORDS

Debate on the Address

Tuesday, 22nd May, 1979.

[Lord Morris.]

... my noble friend Lord Carrington is now Her Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. Indeed, on 10th May last year my noble friend Lord Carrington asked this Question in your Lordships' House:

"My Lords, since the Argentine Government have been advertising for tenders for fishing the territorial waters around the Falkland Islands, and since increasingly fishing is becoming important in that part of the world—and around the Island of Thule as well—and since there may also be oil on the Falkland Islands, will the noble Lord assure the House that the Government will robustly defend our commercial interests?"—
[Official Report, 10/5/78; col. 980.]

My noble friend was, of course, referring in part to the fact that in May 1977 Argentina declared a 200-mile fishing right around the Falkland Islands. Despite United Kingdom official protests, Argentina subsequently contracted fishing rights in this area with Japan and West Germany.

It must be as apparent to noble Lords as it is apparent to me that the commercial and strategic importance of these waters is evidenced by the attention being paid to them by nations other than the United Kingdom, and in particular by the merchant fleets of the Warsaw Pact countries. The South-West Atlantic fishing grounds are being exploited concentratedly by the merchant fleets of Russia, Poland, Bulgaria, East Germany, Japan and West Germany. At this very moment there are two Polish supply ships permanently based at Port William in the Falkland Islands. Yet there is not one British fishing vessel, or any other vessel for that matter, in sight.

In the light of that, I beseech the Conservative Administration as a matter of urgency to review, report back upon and act upon the desk survey by the White Fish Authority, which was commissioned by the former Administration, and to do so in conjunction with the most admirable report of the noble Lord, Lord Shackleton. Although I appreciate that the survey has been on the Minister's desk only since 14th May last, many believe, as I do, that time is of the essence.

Noble Lords will recall that early last December, as a result of a Question tabled by my noble kinsman, the Earl of

Lauderdale, it was learned that Her Majesty's Government had received a hydrocarbon survey of some 200,000 square miles around the Falkland Islands. Furthermore, on 13th March last the noble Lord, Lord Goronwy-Roberts, declared that the results of the survey would be forthcoming "in the near future". Bearing in mind that some six months have passed since Her Majesty's Government received that survey, may I ask the Minister whether the Conservative Administration will be as coy as their predecessors were about informing your Lordships' House of the result of this survey? /

However, with so many matters of a political and economic nature, it is when one considers the defence aspect that the importance of political and economic investment in sensitive areas of British interest and influence becomes clear. I believe fervently that for any British Government to relegate the defence of the South Atlantic to a minor role would be a monstrous act of almost unthinkable short-sightedness. As reiterated in the gracious Speech, it has long been British defence policy to confine its defence resources to NATO. Other than Hong Kong, the Cyprus sovereign bases, Gibraltar, and Belize, there are virtually now no other British defence commitments outside the NATO area.

Defence circles in NATO have long wished to see the responsibilities extended beyond the southern boundary of the Tropic of Cancer in order to safeguard the vitally important sea route around the Cape of Good Hope. At present some 70 per cent. of all NATO strategic material, and some 80 per cent. of the West's oil resources, come round the Cape of Good Hope. I am of course tying a knot in Lord Hankey's argument on this point. Sadly, for political reasons, such a move to extend NATO's southern boundary has never been countenanced.

Yet what do we see happening at the moment? The Soviets are moving fast. Their navy is operating along this route at will, with facilities for land bases in Africa emerging. Reliance by the West on a continually friendly and stable Southern Africa would be foolhardy. Similarly, the political complexion and stability of Governments in South and Central America cannot be relied upon. Any revision of the Panama Canal Treaty, by no means out of the question, or any unforeseen event closing the Panama Canal, would make the Cape Hope route the only sea route linking vital naval and merchant shipping between the east and west coasts of the United States of America, let alone any other international commerce.

Reliance on the Continent of Africa and South America for naval bases has become a less than certain proposition. Yet within the vast area of the Southern Atlantic the Falkland Islands offer a unique base for monitoring Soviet shipping in peace and for controlling and defending allied shipping in war. . . .