

CONFIDENTIAL FILING

Mr James Callaghan's Memoirs

MEMOIRS

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December 1986

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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Principal Private Secretary*

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

MINISTERIAL MEMOIRS:  
MR. JAMES CALLAGHAN

I have shown the Prime Minister your minute of 9 December about Mr. Callaghan's proposed autobiographical memoirs.

The Prime Minister is content for you to proceed as you suggest in your minute.

N.L. WICKS

15 December 1986

CH

PRIME MINISTER

F

## MINISTERIAL MEMOIRS: MR. JAMES CALLAGHAN

Sir Robert Armstrong reports below Mr. Callaghan's insistance that certain passages should appear in his memoirs to be published next April. Before reading my rather complicated minute, you will first need to read Robert's submission at Flag A.

(i) Mr. Callaghan is insisting that he should include in the memoirs details of an exchange with The Queen about Rhodesia, including a quotation from a letter of Her Private Secretary. I am sure Robert is right to reply to Mr. Callaghan on this point as he proposes at X in paragraph 7 of his minute. It rather looks, however, that Mr. Callaghan will insist in maintaining the draft of the memoirs in the form of the text at Flag B. That is a matter for him under the Radcliffe rules.

(ii) His intention regarding his dealings with Argentina about the Falklands in December 1977 is difficult to understand. It is not clear quite why he wishes to include in the memoirs the sentence quoted at Y in paragraph 8 of Robert's minute. This sentence will inevitably prompt more questions than it answers. The implication of the sentence is that Mr. Callaghan left it to Sir Maurice Oldfield to decide whether to "leak" to the Argentinians news about the UK force. Surely, it will be said, the Prime Minister should not have left, in such a vague way, such a sensitive decision to the discretion of Sir Maurice. He ought, it will be argued, to have decided himself whether the information should have been conveyed to the Argentinians, if necessary through secret source, and not left it to the chance of Sir Maurice's decision.

In his minute Robert says that the sentence quoted at Y is not compatible with paragraph 66 of the Falkland Islands Review (at Flag C) or Mr. Callaghan's own statements in the House in 1983 (at Flag D). This is not strictly correct. Both the Falkland Islands Review and Mr. Callaghan's statement say that "we have found no evidence that the Argentine Government ever came to know of its [the force] existence". Mr. Callaghan's sentence at Y does not contradict this. Indeed, Mr. Callaghan's 1983 statement can be construed as implicitly, if not explicitly, compatible with the sentence at Y. There is a hint of mystery in his statement. He deliberately said that he had offered no evidence to the Franks Committee on this matter and he avoided being drawn further on the matter when Mr. Stanbrook intervened in the debate.

So what does all this mean? I rather wonder if Mr. Callaghan is not trying to construe history so as to give the reader the impression that the Argentinians were tipped off with the implication that this was the reason why the Argentinians did not invade. *Yes that is his objective*

In any event I think that you can agree that Robert Armstrong should proceed as he proposes. Agree?

*Yes mb*

*N.L.W.*

(N.L. WICKS)

11 December 1986

DCABPD



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## Falkland Islands Review (Cmd 8787)

66. Cabinet Committee papers show clearly that it was agreed that the force should remain covert. We have found no evidence that the Argentine Government ever came to know of its existence. In the event the negotiations went reasonably well. The Argentine threat receded, and it was agreed after the talks that the naval force could be withdrawn. Consideration was subsequently given to the possibility of deploying the force again for the next round of negotiations in Lima in February 1978, but Ministers decided not to do so.

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[Mr. Callaghan]

knew that we were proposing to withdraw HMS Endurance and they knew that we were not giving citizenship to the Falkland Islanders. What conclusion were they to draw at that time?

Those are some of the reasons why Galtieri made this blunder—of course, it was more than a blunder, it was a crime. Those are some of the reasons why he thought he would have a walkover and that all we would do was protest to the United Nations and get a resolution and that would be the end of it. I am not saying this without some background knowledge. However, he mistook the resolution of the House and the resolution, determination and stamina of the Prime Minister.

The British people have made up their minds about two issues. First, they think that the Prime Minister, at a time when some of her colleagues were faltering, saw the job through when there were difficult and great losses. I can well imagine the mental strain that she was under. The British people understand that. They support and applaud her. But they also believe—this is where I wish that she would go part of the way—that she could have made more effort and that she did not do her job properly before the moment when the war broke. My right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds, East has demonstrated that and I shall give only one more illustration of it.

I promised the Prime Minister that I would deal with the question of 1977. That has now been so well rehearsed by my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil (Mr. Rowlands). In contrast to the hon. Member for Shoreham, I thought that he made a splendid speech and I congratulate him on it. He has been so bustling, aggressive and enthusiastic about it that there is no need for me to say much more about the question that I asked. I said in Cabinet that if we were asked—we are all betraying Cabinet secrets—to explain the presence of the force that was sent, we should say that it was being sent for normal exercise purposes.

When the hon. Member for Shoreham made his report on 30 March I asked a long question, which I shall not bore the House by reading. I summarise it. I asked the Minister whether when it became known that, without fuss or publicity, Britain had sent ships to the Falklands a diplomatic solution followed. I have reconsidered my question and I do not want to alter it. I stand by what I said. In paragraph 66 the Franks report goes on to say:

"We have found no evidence that the Argentine Government ever came to know of its—

the fleet's—

"existence . . . The Argentine threat receded, and it was agreed after the talks that the naval force could be withdrawn".

Both those statements are accurate. I offered no evidence to the Franks committee on the matter. I discussed it with the Franks committee, and I decided, and it of course agreed, that I should not offer evidence on it. However, both statements are accurate and I am not ready to go further today than what I said at that time.

The major issue at that time—I know that some hon. Members are trying to push this as though it was the only thing that mattered—is the point that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for Merthyr Tydfil—that we were there. We were in a position—this is also in the Cabinet minutes—to buttress our negotiations were they to break down. We were not able to repel the full assault but we

were there and able to do so. That was the point about 1977 and I hope that the House will understand that I cannot go any further at this time.

**Mr. Ivor Stanbrook** (Orpington): The right hon. Gentleman is being very tantalising. Did the Argentine authorities know or not?

**Mr. Callaghan:** I am not going any further into that matter. In view of another question that has been raised I should say that the Chief of the Defence Staff told us that the force that it was proposed to send was appropriate. That is the difference between 1977 and 1982. November 1977 was only one incident, but there were many others before and after. Towards the end of 1978, the Government whom I had the honour to head, wished to demonstrate to the Falkland Islanders our continued concern and our willingness to defend them. We also wished to demonstrate our concern to Argentina. We took the very important decision that there should be a programme of regular visits by Royal Naval ships to the Falkland Islands, to begin in April of the following year, 1979.

As part of the deployment we understood from the Ministry of Defence that some ships would be visiting Brazil at that time and that they would go on from there to the Falklands. What was the purpose of those periodical visits and the presence of those ships? In the words of the minute, the visits would be

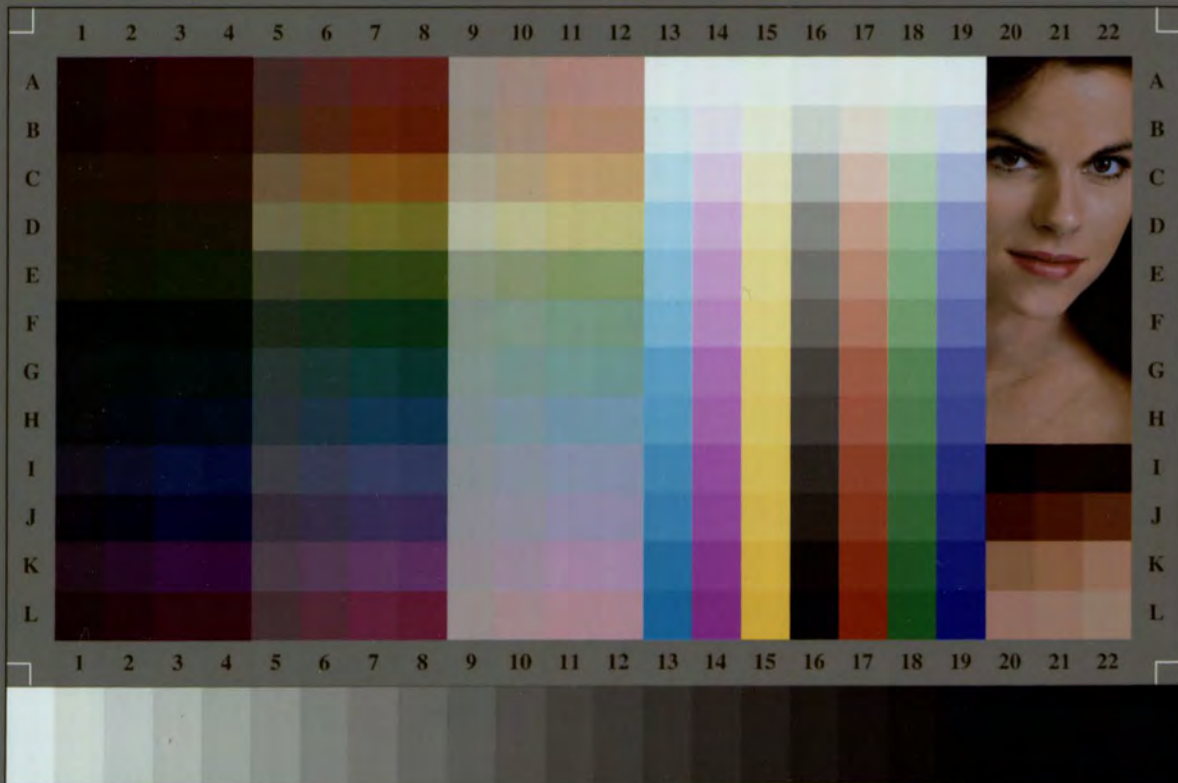
"essential visual evidence of Her Majesty's Government commitment to defend our dependent territories."

In April 1979, we were all engaged in other affairs. I do not know, and I have not inquired, whether a ship was dispatched as it should have been under the direction of the Cabinet Minute of April 1979. On 3 May, the Prime Minister took over. The decision had been made to make periodic and regular visits. I ask the right hon. Lady: what happened to the policy? Were ships sent, and if so, on how many occasions?

If there was an announcement that Endurance was to be withdrawn—such an announcement was made—nothing would have more clearly signalled to Argentina our commitment to the Falkland Islands than regular, periodic visits by Royal Naval ships to Port Stanley. Perhaps the Prime Minister was not told about the policy. Perhaps when my back was turned the Ministry of Defence went back into its bad old ways. I do not know. There is no reason why the Prime Minister should not have reached a similar decision after she had reflected on the matter. Had she done so, that signal would have offset nearly every other signal that suggested that we were weakening in our determination. There was strong evidence in the summer of 1981 that the Argentine Government were turning up the heat.

Paragraph 97 of the Franks report clearly shows the Argentine Government's view.

I return to the point about Ministers not discussing the matter collectively. Lord Carrington dismissed the problem, as I would expect someone from another place to do, by saying that one cannot carry on government by continuous committee. It is a great pity that Lord Carrington never had the discipline of the House of Commons. Since the days of the great Lord Salisbury, every time we have had a Foreign Secretary in the House of Lords it has always been a disaster in the end. That is a lesson that we should learn. We should have the Foreign



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