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Dear Rob,

CALL ON GENERAL IGLESIAS, SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE JUNTA

The highlight of my visiting week was the half hour call this morning on General Héctor Norberto Iglesias, Secretary General of the Junta at the Casa Rosada. I had previously seen the Secretary General of the Air Force Bonino a couple of days earlier but Iglesias was much more impressive. Our short interview was interrupted by direct messages from Galtieri over the intercom giving various instructions. There was an atmosphere of hectic comings and goings and a feeling of being near the centre of power.

2. I asked Iglesias the simple basic questions about his own conception of the Proceso, progress so far and prospects ahead. I also asked about worries over Argentina's external image and his view on the Falklands.

3. In answer to the first question he gave me a very abbreviated history of Argentina over the past ten years. Under the previous regime the country had been heading down the road to self-destruction. In accordance with Argentine tradition and their constitutional responsibilities the Armed Forces had stepped in to avert this. The greatest achievement so far had been the victory over terrorism in the guerrilla war. Security for the country's citizens had been re-established by and large although there were still certain problems such as the recent case of Ana María Martínez which was still being investigated. It could have been some para-military unit but it could equally have been perpetrated as a result of an internal struggle in the party she worked for. The main current problems were political and economic. The aim on the political side was the establishment of a limited number of political parties - five or six (as against the 100 or more which had previously existed). This would not be an easy task as Argentines were

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very individualistic with each believing he could lead his own party. But the task must be undertaken and there must be gradual progress during the coming years. There was no hope of general elections being declared at the end of Galtieri's period of office next year: progress would be slow. The aim was to begin at the lowest levels of political and administrative organisation, namely the local councils and build up from there in the various provinces. When I asked whether they had considered a qualified vote, he said although this corresponded to his personal preference it was not on in this day and age. On the economic front the watch words were privatisation and deregulation since the state apparatus had grown far too large and inefficient. These policies would be strongly opposed by all existing political parties which supported a paternalistic state controlling most aspects of people's lives.

4. Iglesias said he was not over worried about Argentina's external image. It was inevitable after the defeat of Marxist terrorism that the international Marxist movement should mount a worldwide smear campaign especially on human rights issues. The most important task was at home in carrying the proceso forward.

5. The problem of the "Malvinas" had to be solved, preferably in a civilised manner. The question was "in the blood and bones of every Argentine" and was as much a matter of national sentiment as of national need. He was convinced however that both governments were doing everything possible to find a civilised solution.

6. Nothing of this is new but the last comment on the Falklands question may be a little reassuring.

Yours ever,

David

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