

Telephone

Kintbury (04885) 8855

0488 58397
or 397

10.7.82

Church House

16 Church Street

Kintbury, Nr. Newbury

Berks. RG15 0TR

213/7
Dear Prime Minister,

This is a purely personal note sent in the hope that it will be useful to you in the continuing Parliamentary argument over the run-up to the Falklands conflict. You may be fully aware of its content but I send it in case you are not.

As Defence Correspondent of the Express and still with high-level MOD contacts I was involved in the 1977 episode which Jim Callaghan and David Owen have been recalling to attract credit to themselves and suggest fault on your part. As a result I am certain that the facts, which I remember well because of the pressures brought upon me at the time, are different from the story as presented by the Opposition. Their purpose seems to be to suggest that when the Argentines began one of their winding-up exercises in 1977 an all-seeing Labour Government sent out a mini-task-force which deterred them from taking any action. This would seem to be the substance of Callaghan's question as to whether you warned Galtieri that a task-force would be sent if he invaded, implying that you should have tried to deter him as Labour had done so brilliantly before.

In fact Labour's mini-task-force exerted no deterrent effect at all because its presence was kept entirely secret and the Argentinians never found out about it.

The Navy was asked to send out a nuclear submarine and a couple of frigates in case the situation worsened when, presumably, there would have been some more public show of force but the threat went away of its own accord as it had always done in the past.

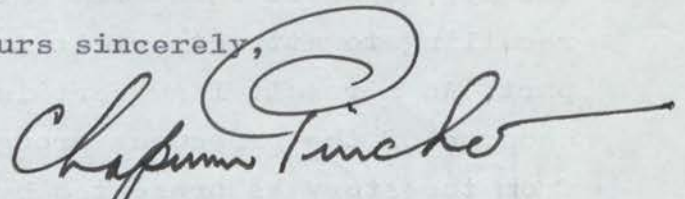
The mission was held so secret that

there were problems over sending Christmas mail to the force
the point at which I came to learn of its existence. Those
concerned with maintaining secrecy over its presence were opposed to
the dropping of any mail but other counsels prevailed and Christmas
mail was dropped. The Argentinians never heard of it, however, and
I, and probably others, were induced to remain silent over the
presence of the force.

It could in fact be argued that the Labour Government wasted
money and resources in sending out the force which, in the result,
served no purpose because the threat disappeared anyway, as it had
so often done in the past.

Any Labour claim that their action resolved the situation in 1977
is quite specious and I am sure that your staff will be able to
check this out from the Naval records.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Chapman Pincher". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Chapman Pincher