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I shall read them
again nearer the time
MS

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PRIME MINISTER

Franks Committee

I attach all the papers relevant to your evidence to the Franks Committee.

Procedure

I asked the Secretary of the Committee today whether he wished to provide any guidance on procedure beyond the attached notes. He said that if you wished to make an opening statement, the Committee will be glad to hear this. But you are not necessarily expected to make a statement. In any case, it is desirable that it should not be too long since the Committee will wish to get down to their own questions (I received the impression that one or two people who have given evidence so far have rather irritated the Committee by making over-long opening statements). Unless you particularly wish to get certain points across at the beginning, you may think it better to let the Committee ask their questions straightaway.

The Committee has not adopted the practice of issuing lists of questions in advance. But the Secretary said that he may be able to indicate later on (a few days before you give evidence) the areas which they will wish to discuss with you.

You will need to decide whether to take anyone with you. The Committee will have no objection if you take one or two members of your staff. Mr. Nott, for example, took two officials - but those who accompany you would not of course intervene.

Before preparing speaking notes for your use, I think it would be best to wait until the Secretary lets me know the likely areas for discussion. But from my talk with him, and having looked through the papers again, I deduce that the following questions may be among those asked:

/ Why

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Why did OD not discuss the Falklands between January 1981 and the end of March 1982?

Part of the answer, at least, is that OD received several reports in writing from the Foreign Secretary during that period (I have noted at least 5) and that new policy decisions were not required because the situation had not changed.

When Argentina in effect rejected the Communiqué agreed in New York at the end of February, should this not have been read as a warning of possible military action?

Part of the answer is that we received other indications, e.g. from US sources, that military action was not contemplated.

Incidentally, I think I have heard you say that Argentina refused to publish the joint Communiqué. This is not strictly true. They published it but accompanied it with a unilateral statement which took away a lot of its force and also gave heavy briefing to the press in Buenos Aires which was contrary to the spirit of the joint Communiqué.

When you minuted on 3 March that "we must make contingency plans" what did you mean? Did you have in mind plans to deal with a severance by Argentina of services for the Falklands (communications, fuel, teachers etc) or plans to deal with possible military action?

Later papers show that you did indeed have in mind military action. For example you asked the Defence Secretary on the evening of 8 March how quickly our own ships could be deployed to the Falklands.

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Why, when several OD papers in 1980, warned that if the Falklands issue was not resolved Argentina might take military action, was there no discussion in OD of how to cope with this possible military threat?

I do not suggest that you need spend time on these questions now. We can wait for a further indication from the Secretary of the Committee of the areas to be covered. Incidentally, I made it very plain to him that I was in no sense pressing to know what questions were going to be asked. He told me that with a number of witnesses likely areas of questioning had been indicated in advance.

A. J. C.

6 October 1982

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