

Argentini

pe 15



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

SIR ROBERT ARMSTRONG

EVENTS PRIOR TO THE INVASION OF THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

In your minute of 12 November you reported Lord Carrington's anxiety that people may have derived, from the Prime Minister's public pronouncements, the impression that she was claiming that earlier indications of Argentina's readiness to use military force were kept from her - or, alternatively, that she was not much involved in events prior to 31 March.

I have looked at all the Parliamentary answers and statements to the press which the Prime Minister has given since 1 October. I do not think that any of these statements could give the impression indicated above. The Prime Minister herself thinks it should be clear to anyone who reads her speech in the debate on 3 April that she was intimately involved from the time of the Argentine landing on South Georgia on 19 March.

I spoke to Lord Carrington this morning. He said that he, too, had no complaint about what the Prime Minister had actually said. The problem arose from press comment on what she had said. I told him that the Prime Minister would be happy to discuss the matter when she next sees him (for your own information, there will be an opportunity for such a discussion in the next ten days or so).

I doubt if we need do any more.

I am copying this minute to John Holmes (FCO), since I had also heard of Lord Carrington's concern from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

A.J. COLES

22 November 1982

AR

12. B. ①

PRIME MINISTER

EVENTS PRIOR TO THE INVASION OF THE FALKLAND
ISLANDS

My minute of 18 November (attached)
referred to Lord Carrington's worries.

I have since checked the debate of
2 April. I am not sure that what you said
then entirely meets his point.

I understand that you are lunching with
Lord Carrington on 5 December. Would you
be prepared to discuss the question with
him then?

A.P.C.

Yes not

19 November 1982

CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER

Events Prior to the Invasion of the Falkland Islands

I have heard that Lord Carrington is worried about one aspect of Falklands/Franks.

You have said on several occasions that the first warning you had of the invasion of the Falklands was on 31 March. There is no disagreement about that: Lord Carrington, officials from the FCO and others have all said the same thing to Franks.

Lord Carrington thinks that the impression may have been created publicly either that earlier indications of Argentine readiness to use military force were kept from you or that you were not involved in the events in the second half of March which led up to the invasion.

Lord Carrington's concern is that you may be criticised when the Franks Report shows that neither of these propositions is true. I have looked at all the public statements you have made since 1 October. I cannot fault any of them. But I do see that, when read with all the press comment that there has been, the public could have got the impression that you were not closely involved before 31 March.

I do not think there is a big problem here but it would disappear entirely if you could find an opportunity in the House or in a letter or an interview to say something like:

"I have always made it clear that the first warning of the invasion of the Falkland Islands reached me on 31 March. I was of course following events in the South Atlantic well before that, in particular after the illegal landing on South Georgia on 19 March."

If you agree, we shall look for an opportunity and tell Lord Carrington what you have in mind.

Agree?

18 November 1982

A.S.C.

*Surely this
is clear
from the
account in
the House on
2 April.
ms*



FALKLANDS INVASION - PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT'S

Your minute to Willie Rickett of 15 November refers.

I have checked all the Prime Minister's public statements and interviews since 1 October. There are no references.

However you will recall she did touch on this in her interview with George Gale in the Express in July (extract attached). She also covered similar ground in August for a BBC TV programme that has still to be broadcast (extract also attached).

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "I. Kydd".

IAN KYDD
PRESS OFFICE

16 November 1982

Of course some small things - though that we a big thing that went wrong. Anything connected with The Queen is a big thing that went wrong. Of course something could go wrong. This is inevitable. It goes on even on newspapers.

GG: Indeed it does. (laughter)

PM: And it isn't always the fault of the journalist and they don't resign when it happens.

GG: No - I'll clear the subject

PM: I tell you jolly well whose fault it is if a paper isn't allowed to come out. It isn't the editor who resigns. Has there been a mass of resignations of editors?

GG: No there hasn't.

GG: Lets look at the Falklands a bit. Presumably the actual crisis, the Argentine invasion, came more or less out of the blue.

PM: Out of the blue ... the Wednesday evening before we got a message which indicated that there was a fleet which had broken off from exercises and looked as if it was going to Port Stanley and looked as if it had the right equipment and the commanders on board. And all of a sudden, I mean I said "this is the worst week we are ever going to live through".

GG: How did you actual feel when you heard the act of the invasion or was that the moment you remember clearly or is there some other moment you remember clearly?

PM: Well the moment I remember vividly is when they brought the information in to me. They brought it in straightaway. They had got some particular information on Wednesday which all of a sudden looked after all the years ^{we'd lived} with threats and nothing had ever happened, all of sudden it looked as if the fleet were on the way. We didn't know whether this was ^{yet} another false alarm. This was much further along the line than any other previous false alarms

and yet I'll remember that moment is etched on my life for all time.

GG: You were here.

PM: I was at my room at the House of Commons. We got people together immediately. The Foreign Secretary was on a visit to Israel. The ^{Chief of} Defence Staff was on a visit to New Zealand. We got people together and if I might put it this way we saw that night that we could in fact get a Task Force on its way if the invasion happened. We had got it on its way by the following Monday which as events happened we did and by that time they were already .. we had got several other things on the way immediately. There had also been some other things on the way before that, just as a precaution. We had been thinking in terms of South Georgia but , as you know there weren't ^{very} many people on South Georgia because they landed quite a lot - 60 - then they took 50 off.

GG: You couldn't have presumably in any ^{way} ^{have} ^{been} expected to have to cope with this kind of crisis.

PM: No. No soothsayer, no prophet, no fortuneteller, no astrologer could have foreseen what was going to happen. It was one of those things. You know George I have a rule in life, the Thatcher rules of politics, The unexpected happens; and when it does there is no point in thinking well if only - you have got to cope with it.

GG: You didn't find the suddenness of it a ^{particular} ^{psychological} or mental strain although you were ...

PM: Oh no that moment one's whole concentration is on dealing with the actual problem and of course on the Wednesday evening about 7 o'clock I got a meeting together very quickly. We were across at the House because we were having to vote. We got a meeting together very very quickly. The Foreign Office, Defence and ourselves, when we saw what we could do and what we couldn't and whether there was anything else we could do to try to either find out .. or stop it. And of course ^{President} ^{Reagan} is the most powerful person to stop it so we literally sat down then and drafted a letter to him. Please would he get on

Recorded 6/8/82

EXTRACT FROM AN INTERVIEW GIVEN BY THE PRIME MINISTER ON THE SUBJECT OF HER ROOM AT THE HOUSE, FOR THE SERIES: "THE PALACE OF WESTMINSTER".

Interviewer: And this is a rather more private part of the room for you.....

PM: Yes, people often come here and see one after Questions. We're here quite a lot you know while Parliament is sitting and ^Members of Parliament want to come in. And I just make it a rule that I'm accessible to ^Members of Parliament and I'm available to talk about the real problems of their constituents. And Ministers come in and delegations.

It also has many, many memories for me, this part. It was actually in this room in which I first heard of the probable invasion of the Falklands. Through that door, suddenly, at about 7 o'clock on the Wednesday evening before the invasion, John Nott came in with his Permanent Secretary saying: "Look, you must see this latest intelligence immediately " and showed me that the Argentine fleet had broken off from its exercises; that it was thought to be en route for Port Stanley, because that was the direction in which it was sailing. The composition of the fleet would be right for an invasion. We did not know of course whether it was going to do it, or not. But I will never forget that moment. And indeed we gathered together the people immediately..... very quickly.....

Interviewer: "In here?"

PM: In here..... all around we got some more chairs and all sat around to see precisely what size fleet we could send and how long it would take to send it and to get some more nuclear submarines on the way, because we could do that quickly.

Interviewer: So it was here that you made those great decisions about the Falklands?

PM: It was here that we had a whole new aspect, a frightening one, opening before us. And we had immediately to consider precisely what could be done; when the decisions must be made, because actually to send a Task Force would be a decision of Cabinet. And of course to wonder whether the invasion would actually take place. And here that I actually drafted the letter which, that night, I sent to President Reagan, telling him of the intelligence we had and asking if he could phone President Galtieri to urge him to stop it. And of course, we had to get on to the United Nations. All those things were done.

I am afraid it was to no avail. As you know, the Task Force went the following Monday. But also I was here on the Friday of that invasion. The House was sitting. And I was sitting at that big table and we weren't able to say that the Falklands had been invaded because, ironically enough, we had to rely on the cable and wireless for communications. And when I saw the Governor, 2 or 3 days later, he told me he'd sent a message immediately that the forces had landed. Unfortunately the communications had ceased three-quarters of an hour before. And that was not unusual there... is a time when they're out of action. And so we had to go on through the day with rumour and counter-rumour coming in.

And there also took place quite a number of quite big decisions around this table. And it was in this room that I heard that we'd lost the 'Coventry' and 'Atlantic Conveyor'. And one day we lost 2 Harriers when they'd been attacking the ground,

PM. ont...

bombing the ground. We lost none, as you know, in combat with other aircraft.

So for me perhaps, the room means a very great deal more than to Prime
Ministers : usually.

Argentina Review.

Check also evidence to Frank.

1. MR. RICKETT

cc: Mr. Kydd

2. Mr. Colson ✓ MR 28. 11

I should be grateful if Charlotte could let me have as soon as possible all statements made by the Prime Minister in Parliament since 1 October relevant to the question of when she knew that Argentina would invade the Falklands or, which is slightly different, when she received indications of Argentine readiness to use military force.

I should be grateful if Ian Kydd could similarly provide any relevant statements which the Prime Minister has made to the media on these matters.

There is some urgency about this.

A.J.C.

15 November 1982

020
CONFIDENTIAL

Ref. A082/0088

MR COLES

Passages deleted and
retained under
Section 3(4).
O'Wayland
7/2/13

Events Prior to the Invasion of the Falkland Islands

Lord Carrington is anxious that people may have derived from some of the Prime Minister's replies to Questions in the House and other pronouncements the impression that she is saying not only that she had no definite intelligence of an Argentine decision to invade until 31 March but that earlier indications of Argentine readiness to use military force were kept from her. It is within his recollection that there was discussion of a possible military response to the situation on South Georgia as early as 25 March, and also a message from Costa Mendez on 28 March which demonstrated intransigence and accused us of provocation. Moreover, the possibility of armed conflict was referred to in a message which Lord Carrington sent to Mr Haig on 28 March.

2. I have said to Lord Carrington that my impression is that what the Prime Minister has been saying is what I heard her say to the Franks Committee: 31 March was the first definite indication she had of an Argentine intention (if not decision) to invade the Falkland Islands; and that, though there had been previous indications of Argentine military activity she and others had viewed those in the context of South Georgia rather than of the Falkland Islands themselves. I do not think that she has been suggesting that there were indications of an Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands earlier than 31 March which were kept from her.

3. I wonder if we should perhaps review the answers which the Prime Minister has given to questions on this subject since, say, 1 October, so that we can see if there is any justification for Lord Carrington's fears.

RA

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

12 November 1982

CONFIDENTIAL

Tuesday 9 November 1982

Mr Ioan Evans (Aberdare): To ask the Prime Minister, if she will now answer Questions relating to the circumstances of the Argentinian invasion of the Falkland Islands.

(Answered by the Prime Minister)

CIRCULATED AS WRITTEN.

I refer the hon Gentleman to the reply which I gave to the hon Member for West Lothian on 28 October 1982 (Official Report vol 29, cols 466-467).

See Notes Below