



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE WHITEHALL LONDON SW1A 2HB

TELEPHONE 01-930 7022

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1993

Dear Nigel

You will want to
put it in your own words
but I suggest the enclosed
as a first draft of the
end of your speech on Frank's
- I think for the wind up!
Yours ever
M.H.H.

Once the Argentinians had decided to invade the Falklands I believe this House and the whole country were united in our determination to restore the freedom of the Islanders. I have never doubted that this was right. I sought to consult and draw in the Opposition parties in the conduct of the war. But I always knew that after the war was won it was inevitable that questions would rightly be asked about the responsibility. It was inevitable and right that the issues of public concern be investigated and resolved.

I myself knew ^{and} ~~I~~ welcomed that every act and decision of mine and my government would be open to scrutiny. Indeed it is this very openness and accountability that distinguishes us from those against whom we fought.

I had therefore to agree Mr Speaker a form of enquiry. I did not - could not - seek to choose a form of enquiry other than one of absolute integrity and independence. I sought therefore one of our most distinguished public figures, Lord Franks.

The Leader of the Opposition approved his name. I suggested a distinguished ex-Permanent Secretary Sir Patrick Nairn. The Leader of the Opposition agreed his name. I suggested two Privy Councillors from each of the main political parties. The Leader of the Opposition named two distinguished Privy Councillors, one of whom sits as a member of the Shadow Cabinet and the other was a distinguished member of the last Labour government. I myself proposed two former Conservative Cabinet Ministers.

I then put forward terms of reference. These were agreed by the rt hon Gentleman the Leader of the Labour Party.

No Prime Minister has ever in any significant way gone further to open the record of their government to public scrutiny and investigation. I believed in what I had done. But I was prepared to put my record to the ultimate test. It cannot be overstated. The personalities involved and the terms of the enquiry were agreed with all parties in this House. I believe Mr Speaker that there is only one conclusion from the Franks Report.

It exonerates my government from any blame on the two issues. We could not have known of the plans for Argentina to invade. We could not have prevented the invasion. These are the conclusions - the only major conclusions of the Report. We welcome this situation. But the Opposition tonight is to reject the findings of the Report. Reject a report which their own representatives signed without reservation. Reject a report their own Privy Councillors unanimously agreed.

The party opposite, Mr Speaker, by this vote tonight is condemned beyond words. They helped to establish the enquiry. They nominated their own people. They waited for the results. They didn't like the results and so they turn now and vote against their own people.

Just think, Mr Speaker, what the Opposition tonight would be saying if the position was reversed. Just imagine, Mr Speaker, if Franks had found against me and I was standing at the dispatch box, disputing the findings, quarrelling with the conclusions, crying foul when the referee had blown the whistle.

Mr Speaker, I agreed the rules for the enquiry, I agreed the names of those that were called to sit in judgement of all that I had done. I placed my own and my government's reputation in their hands. They have exonerated us in full. I am grateful for their support.

We could not have done more.