

URGENTÍSIMO

MEMO

24/1/83

RE THE "FRANKS DEBATE".

from: ALFRED SHERMAN

"We don't start wars; we finish them. But we'd rather they didn't start in the first place." Margaret Thatcher. House of Commons Debate. . . .

- 1) Further to the division of labour between Foot and Healey in the debate (as distinct from the division of Labour exemplified by Benn, Dayell and Foulkes).

One can expect Healey to be the bluff major, one-time Defence Minister, saying how much more firmly Labour would have handled it. He thereby hopes to goad you into what could then be described as "jingoistic . . . militaristic" statements for Foot to denounce in his closing speech, indulging his internationalist peace-loving veteran pacifist instincts. It would be no use your explaining that you were answering his pal Healey, because Foot would be appealing to a different audience, the pacifists, the Bennites, the Argentines, the UN, all our enemies abroad. Remember, that he is reserving a place for himself at Labour conferences after he steps down as leader, pushed, as the white-haired peace orator, like Noel-Baker and Brockway who get all applause and no criticism.

You can't spike all his guns. But you can avoid coming into range of some. You can also bait him. Ask why none of his Socialist comrades in the Argentine and the Leftwing Peronists etc, spoke up for internationalism instead of outdoing Galtieri in jingoism, helping to drive Argentina into war, when the country's energies and resources are needed to reverse their disastrous economic decline.

It's alright Foot orating about socialist internationalism, "left speaks to left" - as in Healey's short-lived euphoria in 1945, before Ernest Bevin barked at him and he subsided meekly into place. True internationalism means give and take, not we give and others take.

More.

- 2) The debate was demanded, in order to discuss the past. The question which you can help decide is how far it should address the future.

There are good reasons for allowing Labour to wallow in the past as much as possible. The Argentines are taking the initiative in military-political preparations. We have yet to move from defence to deterrence, from status quo to initiative. We have months in which to elaborate an overall strategy, military and diplomatic, including not only responses to their forthcoming military attacks, but also initiatives of our own, not least to the USA and Latin America. In the meantime, it would be hard to go beyond generalities.

- 3) As far as the questions addressed by Franks, any government in our position, facing territorial demands and the possibility of an attack, has to balance two conflicting considerations. The negotiations risk prejudice by defence-preparations. But neglected defences bring the risk of defeat, should negotiations fall. Worse still, it is not only defence preparations which can be provocative. Weakness can also provoke attack; especially when you are dealing with the likes of the Junta.

What are our critics alleging: that we sacrificed preparedness to negotiation? Or that we prejudiced the outcome of negotiation in order to play safe? Criticise if you will; but don't try to have it both ways. And remember that anything you say is liable to be picked up and quoted abroad.

I inherited a situation from my predecessor who inherited from a chain of Premiers. The limitations on defence manpower and equipment had long since ruled out maintaining a force on the Falklands at the level needed for defence against a serious invasion attempt.

So we have been left with negotiations, and deterrence should they fail. Negotiations took us nowhere, in the end, because the other side demanded nothing less than the handing over of Islands and their inhabitants to a regime which all political factions in this country regarded as intolerable.

More.

The only deterrent was the likelihood, or certainty, that an invasion would provoke reconquest by us, with all this entailed for the occupier. But how far could we bring this home without being accused of provocation, sabre-rattling, jingoism? Any government in our position walks a tightrope. We may have slipped, . . . but we did not fall.

- 4) As far as "colonialism" is concerned, Europeans - the British and Spaniards - colonised the New World (together with Portugese, Dutch and Danes and the Russians.) No one is more "colonial", "colonist", "coloniser" in the New World than anyone else. It was not the British who wiped out the inhabitants of what is now the Argentine.
- 5) I need not tell you that in the debate you will be expected to defend your position not only from frontal attacks by Labour. The Foreign Affairs committee under Kershaw (read Edward Heath and the FCO) is developing an infinitely more dangerous attack.

Since the end of the fighting, the Bank of England has been twisting the arms of British Banks, to lend to the Argentines. The latter use the cash to buy arms and know how, with the proportion changing in favour of the latter. (Do you need more information on this?)

End.

The Opposition's Amendment to the Government Motion on the Franks  
Debate

Leave out to 'after House' and insert:

Notes that the report confirmed the failure of HMG to give adequate priority to the Falkland Islands in its defence on foreign policy, its failure to consider the problem in Cabinet or the Defence Committee of Cabinet in the fifteen months before the invasion took place, and its failure to respond adequately to a risk of invasion which it knew to exist.

24 January 1983

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10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

25 January 1983

Franks Report

I enclose the latest version of the Prime Minister's speech for today's debate. Any comments would be needed by 11.00 a.m. at latest today - and preferably earlier.

I am copying this letter and enclosure to Brian Fall (FCO) and Richard Mottram (Ministry of Defence).

A. J. COLES

Richard Hatfield, Esq.,  
Cabinet Office.