

*ms*

PRIME MINISTER

Sir Anthony Parsons

Tony Parsons wants to publish in "International Affairs" next January the attached article which deals with the Falklands crisis in the United Nations.

I see no objection to publication. But he will be by then a member of your staff here. In the attached letter to the Foreign Office I have suggested certain amendments.

Agree that the article may be published, subject to those amendments?

*- see one other comment.*  

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*Yes - although I am a little disgraced.*  
*ms*  
A.F.C.

17 November 1982



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

16 November 1982

Dear John,

The Falklands Crisis in the United Nations

/ You will wish to see the enclosed text of an article which Sir A Parsons proposes to publish in the January issue of Chatham House's magazine 'International Affairs'. The article is largely factual and deals with events which were for the most part public knowledge at the time. We see no reason to object to publication or to propose any changes to Sir A Parsons' draft. I should be glad to know whether any objection is seen in No 10.

Yours ever

*John Holmes*

(J E Holmes)  
Private Secretary

A J Coles Esq  
10 Downing Street

## THE FALKLANDS CRISIS IN THE UNITED NATIONS

31st March - 14th June

There were features of the Falklands crisis in the UN which combined to give it an unique quality. First its unexpectedness: the crisis hit the Security Council like a bolt from the blue. The Falklands problem had of course been considered sporadically by the General Assembly over the years, but I doubt whether more than a handful of delegations were aware of the bilateral discussions which had taken place in New York in February 1982 between the British Minister of State, Mr Richard Luce, and the Argentine Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Enrique Ros, still less of the subsequent diplomatic exchanges between the British and Argentine Governments. The tension which had built up in late March over the incident of the scrap dealers on South Georgia had not impinged on the Security Council which was preoccupied with the Middle East - the Lebanon and the West Bank - and latterly with a novel Nicaraguan complaint about potential United States aggression and interference in Central America. Secondly, the crisis, when it struck, attracted more public attention than the most long-serving members of the UN Secretariat could remember being generated by any event in the history of the Organisation. Even now, it is not easy to understand why. Perhaps it was the very improbability of a war between Britain and Argentina, perhaps the remoteness and the romantic overtones of the cause of the hostilities. Perhaps the spectacle of an ex-imperial power which had willingly given up a vast empire suddenly girding itself to defend a tiny community 8,000 miles from its shores, perhaps the novelty of the involvement in conflict of a country from a sub-continent which has been blessedly almost free of the wars and tensions which have beset Europe, Africa and Asia over the past two or three generations. Whatever the reason the fact was that, particularly when the negotiations moved to the United Nations, television, radio and press, not just from Britain, the United States and Argentina, but from all over the world, swarmed to New York. For weeks, every time the Secretary-General, myself, or the Argentine negotiators entered or left the UN building, we were besieged by hordes  
/of cameras

of cameras and microphones. I and my staff had never known anything like it. We must have given hundreds of press, TV and radio interviews. It reached the stage when I was being buttonholed by total strangers in the streets of New York and was being told by visitors from Africa, Eastern Europe and from as far away as East Asia that we, the principal actors in the Falklands drama in New York, were appearing on their television screens more frequently than their own political leaders!

My narrative begins on 31st March when the newly arrived Argentine Permanent Representative, Eduardo Roca, called on the President of the Security Council for the month of March, Mrs Jeane Kirkpatrick of the United States, to tell her that his government was contemplating bringing the question of South Georgia to the attention of the Security Council. Mrs Kirkpatrick was disposed to arrange a meeting between him and me without having recourse to the Council. Meanwhile I had been warned by London that an invasion of the Falklands might be imminent: *delete* the meeting between Ambassador Roca and myself never took place although, on 1st April, he circulated a letter to the Council setting out the Argentine position on the South Georgia incident.

On 1st April the storm broke in New York. The UN Secretary-General, alarmed by press reports, summoned Ambassador Roca and myself separately in the morning to appeal to both our governments to exercise restraint. I responded positively and the Secretary-General, having publicised his appeal at the midday press conference, reiterated it at New York airport in the afternoon as he was leaving for a previously arranged series of visits to European capitals. By that time events had moved on. I had been informed at lunch time by the FCO that an Argentine invasion was imminent and had been instructed to call an emergency meeting of the Security Council to take pre-emptive action. I saw Ambassador Kamanda of Zaire (the President for the month of April) early in the afternoon and the Council met in informal consultations shortly thereafter. I outlined the situation to the astonishment of the assembled delegates. Some of them clearly thought that I had lost my senses and there were murmurs about the need for further time.

/I insisted

I insisted that there was no time to lose and the Council met in the late afternoon in public session for the adoption of a Presidential statement appealing to both parties to exercise restraint. After a brief exchange between myself and Ambassador Roca who appeared to be taken by surprise by this development, the President read out the statement. I immediately took the floor to assure the Council that my Government would be guided by the Presidential appeal and challenged Ambassador Roca to respond similarly. He remained silent.

When we returned that evening to our delegation offices, we were in little doubt that we would wake up the following morning to hear the news that Argentine forces had invaded the Falklands. We decided that we must be ready to initiate immediate action in the Security Council. We agreed on two important tactical considerations. First we must concentrate on the illegitimate use of force to settle a long-standing political problem, and avoid involvement in the merits of the dispute over sovereignty on which we could not expect to secure majority support. Second we must act quickly and avoid becoming mired in the long negotiations which normally precede the adoption of a resolution by the Council. That evening we sketched out the text which was adopted two days later as Security Council Resolution No 502.

The following morning, 2nd April, our worst fears were realised. Argentine forces had invaded the Falklands. After hurried consultation with London, I called the Council, set out the salient facts and read out, in final form, the text of the resolution which I was tabling. I took the almost

/unprecedented step

unprecedented step of bypassing the customary stages of circulating a 'working paper' leading to a preliminary draft resolution, a 'blue draft', in order to put the Council on notice that (a) we would not accept amendments to our draft, and (b) we would, according to the conventions, insist on a vote within 24 hours of tabling. My first intention was to demand a vote the same day but I readily acceded to pressure from members of the Council to wait until 3rd April as the Foreign Minister of Argentina, Mr Costa Mendez, was en route for New York to present his government's case to the Council.

On 3rd April, the Argentinian Foreign Minister arrived and a fierce and complex debate ensued during which Argentine forces invaded South Georgia. Costa Mendez spoke first, the burden of his statement, backed by a lengthy historical survey, being that Argentina had done nothing more than recover national territory which had been seized by the British by an illegitimate act of force in 1833. He was supported to a greater or lesser extent by certain Latin American delegates including the Foreign Minister of Panama (the Latin American member of the Council) who expressed himself in vitriolic terms and concluded by proposing a suspension of the meeting for two or three hours so that the Council could consider the text of an alternative, and strongly prejudiced, draft resolution which he had read out to the Council. I opposed this delaying tactic equally firmly and it was defeated in a procedural vote by 7 in favour (China, Ireland, Japan, Panama, Poland, Spain, USSR) to 3 (France, UK, US) with 4 abstentions (Guyana, Jordan, Togo, Zaire), thus failing to secure the necessary 9 votes.

The debate continued and I spoke in refutation of the statement by the Argentinian Foreign Minister, in particular of the dangerous proposition he had put forward that the peaceful settlement Articles of the UN Charter applied only to disputes which had arisen since the Charter entered into force in 1945. At the close of the debate the Panamanian Foreign Minister tried to rob me of my vote by claiming that, under Article 27(3) of the Charter 'in decisions under Chapter VI [Pacific Settlement of Disputes] of the Charter a party to a dispute - in this case the United Kingdom - shall abstain from voting'. I counter-attacked that the resolution had been

/drafted in

drafted in relation to a breach of the peace and had been proposed with Chapter VII [Acts with respect to threats to the peace ...] of the Charter in mind: hence the provisions of Article 27(3) did not apply. I was supported by the Permanent Representative of Spain, an accepted expert on UN procedures, and Panama decided not to call for a procedural vote.

What were our feelings as the vote drew near? [At the outset we had been confident of 4 certain votes in favour (UK, US, France, Guyana) with 2 probables (Japan, Ireland) and 4 possibles (Togo, Uganda, Zaire, Jordan)]. We knew that our maximum number of favourable votes was 10 since the three Communist delegations (USSR, China, Poland) could not be expected to support a draft resolution tabled by the United Kingdom nor, for different reasons, could Spain and Panama. It all therefore depended on the votes of the four Non-Aligned delegates, 3 from Africa and 1 from Asia (Jordan). Without securing the support of three of these four, assuming that we could count on Japan and Ireland, we would still fall short of the necessary 9 votes for the adoption of the resolution. For once in the United Nations, the debate itself was of crucial importance. Few delegations were knowledgeable about the Falklands. The Non-Aligned had committed themselves at successive Summits to the Argentine position on sovereignty: yet all Non-Aligned states in the UN have a healthy antipathy to the use of force to settle political problems. It was an open contest and I felt, as never before in my UN experience, that the listeners were hanging on the words of the speakers, and that a significant number of delegations was ready to decide their votes in the light of the debate, not in the light of previously entrenched positions as has for years been the case over, for example, the Middle East and Southern Africa.

Before the debate started on 3rd April, we in the British Delegation discussed this question at length. As I recall, we concluded that we would probably secure 7 or 8 votes, with luck we would get 9, with unbelievable luck we might achieve the maximum of 10. Would there be a Soviet or Chinese veto? We discounted the latter, our instinct telling us that China would abstain. We had no feel for the likely position of the USSR, /even less as

even less as the Soviet Delegation dashed to and from the telephone as the debate wore on.

When the moment came, we were on tenterhooks, although careful to give no outward sign of concern: I did not even look in the direction of my Soviet colleague as the pencils went up! The result was better than we had dared to hope for - 10 in favour (UK, US, France, Guyana, Ireland, Japan, Togo, Zaire, Uganda, Jordan), 1 against (Panama) with 4 abstentions (China, USSR, Poland, Spain). Resolution 502 was born (text at Annex) and I confess that, on our return to my office to report the day's proceedings to London, I and my Falklands team unhesitatingly emptied a couple of bottles of champagne which we found in the refrigerator - the left-overs from a farewell party of the previous week. Antipathy to the use of force had triumphed. We had secured a firm base of international support amongst a wide spectrum of member states, without which, in my view, it would have been difficult to persuade our partners, friends and allies to join us in the economic and political measures which, coupled with military action under Article 51 of the Charter (the inherent right of individuals on collective self-defence), formed the three planks of the British Government's policy, accepted by all parties in Parliament, of reaction to the Argentine aggression.

There followed a period of intensive private and public activity in the UN while Secretary of State Haig pursued his shuttle diplomacy between London and Buenos Aires throughout April. We took opportunities in various UN bodies to press our case against Argentina while the Argentines concentrated on mobilising support amongst the Non-Aligned Movement for their sovereignty claim, and solidarity in the Organisation of American States. I kept in close touch with the Secretary-General and with the President of the Security Council. Regular briefings were held with the ten members of the European Community and with Commonwealth delegations. On 8th April the Secretary-General established a task force headed by Under-Secretary-General Rafee Ahmed of Pakistan to work on contingency plans in the event that Secretary Haig's efforts failed and the Secretary-General was called upon to use his good offices between the parties. On 19th April the Secretary-General gave

/to ourselves,



to ourselves, the Argentine and US delegations a list of the ways in which the UN might be able to help to bring about a negotiated settlement. We conscientiously circulated to the Security Council in accordance with the Charter, the detailed measures which we were taking under Article 51. This led to a blizzard of Notes from ourselves and the Argentine delegation eventually numbering well over one hundred, describing and justifying the various military and other moves made by both sides. Throughout I made our position crystal clear both in public and in private, namely that we would obviously prefer the peaceful implementation of the central paragraph of SCR 502 - total Argentine withdrawal - but we would not in the meantime allow anything to inhibit us from exercising our inherent right to self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter.

Throughout April nerves became increasingly frayed amongst the Security Council membership as the international media, and our own Notes, reported the steady advance of the British Task Force. To begin with it had been difficult to convince my colleagues that we meant business and there was a tendency to believe that the Falklands crisis would follow the pattern of so many events of which the Security Council was seized - a violent change in the status quo followed by an interminable negotiation leaving the altered situation unredressed: the Middle East, Afghanistan, South East Asia being good examples. However, as the days of April passed, there was a growing realisation that we were serious. Pressure from various delegations rose and fell for a return to the Security Council and a call for military restraint combined with negotiations. I held firm to our line and the President of the Council, as well as the Secretary-General, maintained that the Council should do nothing which might inhibit Secretary Haig's efforts to reach a negotiated settlement. Our re-possession of South Georgia on 25th April further raised the temperature and the pace quickened at the turn of the month with our announcement of a Total Exclusion Zone, Secretary Haig's announcement of the failure of his mission, and the sinking of the General Belgrano on 2nd May followed two days later by the sinking of HMS Sheffield. The stage was set for the next phase, the initiative by the Secretary-General which he had increasingly come to regard as /both necessary

both necessary and inevitable.

On 2nd May, coincidentally with the abortive initiative by the President of Peru, the Secretary-General gave to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, Mr Francis Pym, who was staying that night with me in New York, a 'set of ideas' for a negotiated settlement including the concepts of mutual withdrawal, the commencement of diplomatic negotiations for a definitive settlement of the dispute, the lifting of sanctions and exclusion zones, and the establishment of transitional arrangements in the Falklands pending the outcome of the diplomatic negotiations. The same day he presented his 'set of ideas' to the Argentine delegation. He was immediately almost blown off course by a formal request from Ireland to return to the Security Council. This led to a difficult session of informal consultations of the Council in which I repeatedly made clear that we were not prepared to 'exercise restraint' - a meaningless phrase in the circumstances of the hostilities in the South Atlantic - or to freeze our military preparations in any circumstances other than immediate Argentine withdrawal. Fortunately it emerged that our support had not evaporated and the disposition of the Council was to allow the Secretary-General to pursue his negotiations without the hindrance of an acrimonious public debate: Ireland agreed to suspend its request.

On 5th and 6th May respectively the Argentine and British Governments indicated their willingness to proceed on the basis of the Secretary-General's 'set of ideas', and the most intensive and vigorous series of negotiations, attended by maximum public interest, continued until 19th May. The Secretary-General saw myself and my Argentine colleague, Vice-Minister Enrique Ros, once or more often twice a day throughout the whole period, weekends included, working in an orderly and systematic way towards the elaboration of an agreement which would embrace the points in his original document, and which would put the Islands under temporary UN administration for a defined period during which negotiations for a final settlement would be carried out under his auspices.

As the talks progressed my hopes fluctuated. I began with little optimism but was inclined to revise this when, on 11th /May, the

May, the Argentine delegation agreed to a formulation under which the outcome of the diplomatic negotiations would not be prejudged at the outset, ie establishing that the outcome need not be the transfer of the Falklands to Argentine sovereignty. This was a major concession, or so it seemed. By the weekend of 15th/16th May when I was summoned to London for consultations, I was not entirely without hope of a successful result, although my instinct told me otherwise. The two sides did not seem to be impossibly far apart on the modalities of mutual withdrawal and the timing of the lifting of exclusion zones and sanctions. On the interim administration of the Islands under UN auspices we were still separated on the vital point of principle that the democratic institutions in the Falklands must be revived during the transitional period. But we appeared reasonably close on the nature and duration of the diplomatic negotiations for a definitive solution. There were other differences but they did not seem to be necessarily to be unbridgeable.

That weekend in London and at Chequers the Inner Cabinet worked out our final detailed position on the draft agreement, which was subsequently announced to the House of Commons and published on 20th May. I returned to New York on 17th May and presented our proposals to the Secretary-General the same morning, making clear that they were final and that we required a response from the Government of Argentina within 48 hours: in our view there was no case for allowing the negotiations to drag on any longer. In the late evening of 18th May the Secretary-General gave me a summary of the Argentine response: it was immediately clear that this amounted to rejection of our proposals. This was confirmed when I received the full text on the morning of 19th May. The Secretary-General made a last-minute attempt to avert failure: he spoke on the telephone to President Galtieri and to Mrs Thatcher and subsequently sent to both sides an Aide-Memoire containing full formulations on the two questions of the interim Administration and the diplomatic negotiations, with briefer comments on the other points. I responded on 20th May that we would have views on his Aide-Memoire which did not agree with our own proposals (although it was not far removed from them) but that we would need to see the Argentine reaction

/before commenting

before commenting in detail. The Secretary-General received no response from the Argentine delegation by the dead-line which he had set.

On the evening of 20th May the Secretary-General reported failure to the President of the Security Council. On 21st May, at the request of Panama, the Council met in open session for a debate which continued for 5 days. The Secretary-General opened the proceedings with a methodical and impartial summary of the negotiations. He concluded that, towards the end of the previous week, essential agreement had been reached on many points, leaving 4 crucial differences, namely certain aspects of the interim administration of the territory; provisions for the extension of the time frame for completion of the diplomatic negotiations and the related duration of the interim administration; certain aspects of the mutual withdrawal of forces; and the geographic area to be covered by the terms of the interim agreement. The Secretary-General described how he had spoken by telephone to President Galtieri and Mrs Thatcher and drew attention to the subsequent aide-memoire which he had presented to both parties. He finished his summary by stating that, by the previous evening, the necessary accommodations had not been made: he had therefore concluded that he must inform the President of the Council of his appraisal.

Vice-Minister Ros spoke next in strong but measured terms. He rehearsed the Argentine position on all aspects of the dispute and reiterated Argentina's willingness to negotiate on the basis of SCR 502 notwithstanding their reservations about the resolution. He criticised in detail our position on the various aspects of the Perez de Cuellar negotiations and dealt fiercely and at length with our military build-up and the hostilities which had already taken place (by that time British forces had landed on the Falklands).

I spoke next. I first responded to all the points which Ros had made, ending with the question of who had shown flexibility or rigidity during Perez de Cuellar's negotiations. I said that my Government could have adopted the legitimate attitude that there was no alternative to the withdrawal of the aggressor and the full restoration of the status quo ante.

/But, by 17th May,

But, by 17th May, we had been prepared to contemplate parallel and mutual withdrawal under United Nations supervision, and a short interim period under UN administration in order to enable diplomatic negotiations to proceed for a definitive settlement of the problem. Although we insisted that the democratic institutions on the Island should remain during the interim period, we were prepared to accept Argentine representation in those institutions disproportionate to the size of the Argentine community. None of this demonstrated rigidity or inflexibility. However, the Argentine response to our proposals had been wholly unsatisfactory, and we had no choice but to regard it as a further attempt to procrastinate in order to enable Argentina to consolidate its hold on what it had seized by force. The Argentine Government had insisted on including South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands in the agreement. This was unacceptable. These islands were 1000 miles from the Falklands: they were uninhabited and our title to them rested on different grounds to our title to the Falklands. The Argentine Government had insisted on an unequal process of withdrawal of forces which we would not accept. The Argentine Government had rejected the continuation in being of the democratic institutions on the Islands which we had developed over the years in accordance with our obligations under Article 73 of the Charter. Argentina was only prepared to entertain the possibility that 'persons' who were members of the population of British origin, and Argentine residents in the islands, in equal numbers, might be appointed as 'advisers' by the UN interim administration. This was not only wholly unacceptable to us in concept but the idea of parity in numbers of 'advisers' between a population of about 30 and a population of about 1800 was ludicrous. Argentina required freedom of access with respect to residence and property during the interim period. This would have enabled Argentina fundamentally to change the demographic status of the islands during a short interim administration, clearly an unacceptable proposition. The Argentine formulation on how and when and by what means the negotiations for a final settlement should be concluded was also totally unacceptable: there was equally no assurance, contrary to what we had previously been led to believe, that Argentina agreed to language which would leave it beyond doubt that the outcome of

/the negotiations

the negotiations should not be prejudged at the outset. I summed up that I had said enough to demonstrate the justice of my Government's conclusion that the Argentine response amounted to a comprehensive rejection of our proposals. I concluded that, although my Government's mind would never be closed to any avenue which promised to bring about a peaceful solution to the crisis, we could not in the meantime allow ourselves to be in any way inhibited from carrying out military action in accordance with our inherent right of self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter.

Nearly 50 delegations then spoke in the debate, apart from frequent interventions by myself, Argentina, Panama and others in right of reply and to introduce or explain draft resolutions. Almost every member of the Latin American group took the floor in support of Argentina. Many of the Latin American delegates expressed their support in relatively restrained terms: only Venezuela and Panama were nakedly hostile and abusive and I had some brisk exchanges with the Foreign Minister of Panama. These effusions were offset by strong statements on our side from New Zealand, Canada, Australia, Kenya, Belgium, Guyana and other Caribbean representatives. The remainder of our friends and partners, including the United States, expressed themselves in carefully balanced language.

At the end of the debate my Irish colleague tabled a resolution designed to achieve a suspension of hostilities and a resumption of negotiations in terms which I had told him in advance that we would have to oppose. But the Non-Aligned Members of the Council, less of course Panama, were anxious to avoid a British negative vote and proposed to amend the Irish text to a point where we could accept it. I thanked my Non-Aligned colleagues but warned them that their amendments, although acceptable to us, might well impose an impossible task on the Secretary-General. We were resolved not to accept a cease-fire unless it was inextricably linked to immediate Argentine withdrawal. In the light of all our experience in the past rounds of negotiations conducted by Secretary Haig, the President of Peru and the Secretary-General, my honest feeling was that the Secretary-General would not be able to achieve positive results within the deadline of 7 days which the draft resolution stipulated.

/I advised them

I advised them to make sure that the Secretary-General was willing to try his hand again, before they brought their draft to a vote. After consulting the Secretary-General, they decided to go ahead and, on 26th May, SCR 505 (text at Annex 2) was adopted unanimously. I made our position clear in explanation of our vote.

The Secretary-General lost no time in approaching my Argentine opposite number and myself, although he was under no illusions regarding the magnitude of his task since I had made clear in my statements in the debate that we were not prepared to become embroiled in another endless negotiation leaving our hands tied and Argentine forces entrenched on the Islands. After a week of hectic but fruitless negotiation the Secretary-General reported failure to the Council on 2nd June, and the formal meetings resumed.

My Spanish colleague took the lead with Panama on behalf of Argentina and, after two days of debate and negotiation involving several amendments to their original text, they pressed to the vote an apparently innocuous cease-fire resolution which, in our judgment, would have had precisely the effect which we refused to contemplate. The vote was deliberately timed to coincide with a ministerial meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement Coordinating Bureau which was taking place in Havana.

Even at this late stage, and even given the predilection of the United Nations to adopt without question calls for cease-fires and military restraint, Spain and Panama had the gravest difficulty in securing the necessary 9 votes to turn our negative vote into a veto. We were not isolated. Had it not been for 2 last-minute switches in voting intentions, the draft would only have secured 7 votes. As it was, the voting was 9 in favour (Spain, Panama, China, USSR, Poland, Ireland, Japan) 2 against (UK, US) with 4 abstentions (France, Jordan, Guyana, Togo). Three of the five uncommitted Non-Aligned delegations had not been prepared to cast their votes in the opposite sense to ours. Fortunately any odium which might have attached to us for using our veto was diverted by the astonishing statement by Mrs Kirkpatrick after the vote that she had been requested by her Government to record the fact that, were it possible to  
/change their vote,

change their vote, they would like to change it from a veto - a 'no' - to an abstention. This revelation left the Council and the media stunned and I was able to escape from the Chamber almost unnoticed by the press, the microphones and the TV cameras as they engulfed Mrs Kirkpatrick.

The conclusion of this debate brought the drama in the United Nations to a close. The Secretary-General, whose mandate under SCR 505 remained in being, made a last-minute attempt with us and Argentina to avert a final battle for Port Stanley, but without success. On 14th June Argentine troops on the Falklands surrendered and on 24th June British forces repossessed the South Sandwich Islands. By that time the attention of the Security Council had turned to the tragedy of the Lebanon and the General Assembly was in the midst of the Second Special Session on Disarmament: action in New York over the Falklands had declined to desultory exchanges of Notes by ourselves, the Argentine and Panamanian Missions.

As I reflect many months later on what was undoubtedly the most hectic and tempestuous episode in my long association with the United Nations, a multitude of impressions and indeed of lessons for the future fill my mind. I will end this article by setting some of these down.

First, the Falklands crisis exploded the myth that Western states and particularly ex-imperial powers, are permanently isolated and on the defensive in an Organisation which is dominated by a Third World majority and obsessed by the doctrine of de-colonisation. Our cause was right - resistance to the use of force to regulate political disputes - and our policy was clear and resolute. The uncommitted Non-Aligned members of the Security Council, and a large number of delegations outside the Council, were prepared to judge the case on its merits. We started out with the maximum support for our initiative in calling the Security Council and tabling our own resolution and, even when the natural instinct of the United Nations to favour negotiations against mounting hostilities took charge, the basic justice of our cause was not forgotten and I never felt the coldness of isolation. As I have pointed out earlier in this article, only 2 of the 5 uncommitted Non-  
/Aligned delegations



Aligned delegations on the Council felt able to support an apparently innocuous draft resolution calling for a cease-fire as late as 4th June.

Secondly, the Falklands crisis destroyed a second myth, namely that United Nations debates are invariably sterile affairs consisting of dull set speeches generally addressed to domestic audiences with the pattern of voting predetermined before the debate begins. The Falklands debates were lively, serious and full of meaning. Many of the statements delivered, including a large number of my own, were extemporised in the light of the current of the day's proceedings. There was no miasma of boredom hanging over the Council Chamber. Every word was listened to with close attention, every document carefully studied, and I felt throughout, as I have no doubt that my Argentine opposite numbers did, that tactical errors and omissions in debate and in private consultations, could cost support and forfeit votes when the time came. This was in vivid contrast to the sterilities of debate on the subjects which mainly preoccupy the Security Council. The Falklands debate had a pristine quality which I had not previously encountered.

Thirdly, I was profoundly impressed by the diplomatic skill, the dedication and impartiality of the Secretary-General. I had known and liked Javier Perez de Cuellar for a long time and had warmly welcomed his election, only a few months before, to the Secretary-Generalship. The Falklands crisis was his first and most exacting test. He did not succeed, but no-one could have done more or done it with greater expertise. He passed with flying colours, an excellent augury for the future of the Organisation under his stewardship.

Fourthly, I was intrigued by the difference between the attitudes of many states as expressed in their capitals as compared to their public positions as stated before the eyes of the world in New York. On the Latin American side, so far as I know, little or no hostility was manifested towards Britain in the majority of Latin American capitals. This contrasted strongly with the flood of rhetoric which poured out in the Security Council. On the <sup>our</sup> ~~the Western~~ side, we received invaluable /support from

support from the United States, certain Commonwealth countries and our European partners in capitals: with some notable exceptions to which I have drawn attention this was not apparent in statements before the Council.

Fifthly, what were the true intentions of Argentina following the invasion? Were their protestations of willingness to implement SCR 502 in all its parts sincere? I can only express a personal view but, on reflection, I still believe that what I thought at the time was right. I am convinced that the Argentine Government made two fatal miscalculations at the outset. They did not believe that we would react militarily to their seizure of the Falklands and South Georgia and they never expected that we would win and hold the diplomatic initiative in New York: how could a former imperial power prevail diplomatically in the UN over an issue of decolonisation against a member of the Non-Aligned Movement whose cause in the South Atlantic had been espoused by successive Non-Aligned Summits? They were wrong: they had underestimated the depth of the antipathy of virtually the whole membership to the use of force to regulate political disputes whatever the merits. Thereafter I believe that the Argentine Government was determined to remain in possession of the Islands; having embarked on their military adventure, they had no intention of seriously negotiating the peaceful implementation of SCR 502. Their objective was to play for time indefinitely in the hope that international opinion would gradually move against us; that the origins of the crisis would be forgotten; that, as our military reaction developed we would be seen as the aggressor and they as the victims; that as they gradually pushed us onto the wrong foot in the eyes of world opinion we would not dare to pursue our military operations beyond, say, a temporary blockade; and that, after a time, we would abandon our attempts to repossess the Islands and content ourselves with saving face in a welter of interminable UN negotiations. I may of course be wrong and I must emphasise that the above opinion is strictly personal.

In conclusion I venture to suggest that the reputation of Britain in the United Nations has been greatly enhanced by our handling of the Falklands crisis. Not only our allies and

/partners, but

partners, but our adversaries too, could witness the unswerving determination with which we pursued all three aspects of our policy, diplomatic, military and economic. And I like to believe that many Non-Aligned countries may have felt reassured to know that Britain is still both capable and willing to act firmly when important national interests and internationally accepted principles are at stake.

2024.11.15





10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

18 November 1982

*Argentine  
File No*

*Q*

THE FALKLANDS CRISIS IN THE UNITED NATIONS

Your letter of 16 November enclosed the text of an article which Sir Anthony Parsons proposes to publish in the January issue of "International Affairs".

We have no objection to the publication of this article but would like to see some changes to the text.

On page 2, we should like the sentence "Meanwhile I had been warned by London that an invasion of the Falklands might be imminent" to be deleted. As you know, there is great interest at present in the sequence of events which led to the Government being aware of the likelihood of an Argentine invasion. This is bound to be revived when the Franks Report is published - and that could be in January. While the sentence concerned need not necessarily contribute to the argument, some readers might be inclined to investigate when precisely Sir Anthony Parsons received the warning that an invasion was imminent. I note that, according to his narrative, this can only have been on 31 March but even that does not dispose of the matter because there is interest in the precise time on that day when the facts became available.

On page 3, in the middle paragraph, we should like the words "tactical" and "and avoid involvement in the merits of the dispute over sovereignty on which we could not expect to secure majority support" to be deleted. Both of these could lead to unfavourable comment by people who are inclined to argue that the Government's attitude on sovereignty has not always been sufficiently robust.

On page 5, could the sentence "At the outset ..... Jordan" be deleted? Given the Prime Minister's relations with, in particular King Hussein, and his ready response to her request that he should vote for the resolution in question, I do not think she would want it put about by, as it were, a member of her staff that there was a time when we doubted whether Jordan would be with us. Nor would she wish to indicate that we doubted others who voted with us.

/On page 9,

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- 2 -

On page 9, the reference to "the Inner Cabinet" should be deleted. The sentence could simply read "That weekend in London and at Chequers our final detailed position on the draft agreement was worked out".

I should be grateful if you could pass on these points to Sir Anthony Parsons.

A. J. COLES

John Holmes Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
London SW1A 2AH

Telephone 01- 233 4330

*AIC  
on return*

PERSONAL

A J Coles Esq  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON  
SW1

Your reference

Our reference

Date 5 November 1982

*Dear John*

*I have said that this should be  
submitted to No. 10 though the  
Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary.*

Tony Parsons has written a paper for Chatham House's magazine 'International Affairs' about the handling of the Falklands crisis at the United Nations. It is in fact the text of a lecture that he gave at Chatham House a few weeks ago. As it will appear shortly after he takes up his new appointment, he has asked me to get in touch with you in this way to enquire whether it should be seen at No. 10 before approval is given for its publication.

*A.S.C. - ii*

*p.a.*

The paper is largely factual and describes events most of which took place under the full glare of publicity. Robin Fearn and I have been through it and have identified only one sentence which we might prefer to see omitted. I am awaiting the final clearance from Library & Records Department.

Could you let me know if you would like me to send a copy across?

*Yours ever  
Nigel*

N C R Williams  
United Nations Department

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