

Nr (des)

26 April 1982

MR INGHAM

cc Mr Howe
Mr Wolfson
Mr Vereker

PANORAMA INTERVIEW: FALKLANDS

Our own view of the Falklands situation was (I would guess like most people's) that it was analogous to a hijack. Tony Jay rang me this morning to say that a lot of the people he talked to, while generally sympathetic to the Government, nevertheless had the nagging question in their minds "Why are we doing this for these unnecessary islands so far away, possibly risking getting troops killed - for what?"

Tony suggested that the correct answer to this was the hijack model. Most people would agree that the tough line on hijacking ("Once you've landed, you'll never take off again") has been the right one. If the Prime Minister reminded the audience of the similarities (of course there are other factors as well; the analogy is not total) to a hijack, the lesson learnt in hijacking (that you have to face down the very first hijack; that if you don't, there will be another one) and the potential for other Falkland-type aggressions in South America and elsewhere in the world, people may come to see that there is much more at stake than saving face, or 1,800 Falklanders, or 30,000 sheep or a bit of rocky territory 8,000 miles away. There is not simply principle, but the greatly increased risk of similar and perhaps much more dangerous aggression elsewhere, if this one is not absolutely (and ^{if necessary} ruthlessly) nipped in the bud. This is, of course, why it is rather unwise to talk about the islanders' wishes being paramount. That could be the wrong word to use either way. It could commit Britain to taking tougher military action than it otherwise would; or alternatively making territorial concessions (because the Falklanders are naturally enough not keen to get involved in a shooting war themselves) which would encourage territorial aggression elsewhere.

Our tone of voice should, of course, be consistent with the hijack analogy. If we talk about it as a combination of Stalingrad and Alamein, we risk looking absurd. This is not a battle for our homeland and civilisation. It is the very quiet, very calm, very firm imposition of international law and order. "Ring out the bells" brings us to the edge of black farce for the South Georgia operation.



JOHJ HOSKYNS