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10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

6. May 1982

Dear John,

CALL ON PRIME MINISTER BY DR. RAFAEL CALDERA

Thank you for your letter of 5 May.
Dr. Caldera duly called on the Prime Minister
today. I enclose a record of the conversation.

I am copying this letter to John Halliday
(Home Office), David Omand (Ministry of Defence)
Keith Long (Office of the Chancellor of the
Duchy of Lancaster) and David Wright (Cabinet
Office).

*Yours ever
John Cole.*

John Holmes, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

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SUBJECT

RECORD OF CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND
DR. RAFAEL CALDERA IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AT 1600 HOURS
ON THURSDAY, 6 MAY.

Present

Venezuela

Prime Minister

Dr. Caldera

Mr. Coles

Lord Thomas of Swynnerton

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The Prime Minister said that the British people were deeply wounded by Argentina's invasion of the Falkland Islands. No European Government had been more friendly towards South America.

Dr. Caldera said that Argentina had probably been closer to Britain than any other South American country. He himself had been abroad for four weeks but it was clear to him that emotions were running very high in Venezuela. There existed what he called a "pluralistic solidarity". Regardless of differences between peoples and Governments, there was a strong common feeling throughout Latin America in favour of Argentina. More than 90% of Latin America sympathised with Argentina's cause. Recent events awakened memories of a previous epoch when colonial Britain held bases in far away countries. At a press conference in India recently he had been asked whether the Argentine action against the Falkland Islands was justifiable. In reply, he had asked whether India's action in the case of Goa was justifiable.

The Prime Minister commented that just as India had got away with the affair of Goa, Galtieri thought he could get away with his invasion of the Falkland Islands. But if he did the implications for other countries would be very serious.

Dr. Caldera said he was speaking only as a private person. He wished to refer to the Venezuela/Guyana problem. When he had been in office, he had taken the responsibility of signing the Port of Spain protocol which had postponed the issue for 12 years. That protocol expired in June. The Geneva Agreement

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had established an obligation on the parties to search for a practical solution. But the lesson of the Falkland Islands was that dialogue did not produce results.

The Prime Minister disagreed. The friendly dialogue had been carried on with Argentina up until February of this year. The Junta had then declined to publish a Communique about the latest round of talks. We had a proud record of bringing people to independence. Dr. Caldera said that only 1800 people were involved. He could not consider the Falkland Islands to be a country; they were merely a territory. He urged the Prime Minister to take account of the very strong and growing feelings in Venezuela which, since the United States had sided against Argentina, were partly directed against Washington. People argued that in the case of Suez the United States had ensured that Britain and France did not recapture the Suez Canal. But their attitude over the Falkland Islands was different.

Lord Thomas asked why a democracy like Venezuela should support a military dictatorship like Argentina.

Dr. Caldera again referred to "pluralistic solidarity". He had last visited Argentina in 1973. There were very special problems there. Peronism, despite all its failures, was still a popular movement. He did not approve of the dictatorship but where Argentina was involved in military conflict, especially after the Belgrano tragedy, Latin American solidarity was inevitable.

The Prime Minister said that feelings were very strong here too. We did not want our people to live under the heel of the dictator. Argentina would not give freedom to the Falkland Islanders. They would behave like an imperial power. Dr. Caldera repeated that the Falkland Islands were not a country. There were just a few settlers there. But he wished to emphasise two points. First, he was a moderate Latin American and a good friend of the United Kingdom. The Prime Minister should imagine how, if he held these views about the Falklands, other less moderate Latin Americans felt. Secondly, in June the issue of

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Guyana would have to be taken very seriously if a major dispute was to be avoided. Forbes Burnham was trying to foster nationalistic attitudes against Venezuela. The Prime Minister asked whether that meant that Venezuela was going to invade Guyana. Dr. Caldera said he was not saying that but the situation was very difficult. Many Venezuelans felt that Guyana had no serious intention to work for a practical solution. It was the principal duty of statesmen to try ^{to} and foresee and deal with issues.

Reverting to the Falklands issue, Lord Thomas suggested that, whatever Dr. Caldera thought of the Argentine claim, he could not possibly find acceptable the method Argentina had chosen to pursue that claim. Dr. Caldera said that it was an emotional matter. The Prime Minister commented that if the world were governed by emotions, no boundary would be safe. There were many regions of South America which were threatened by boundary disputes. International law must prevail.

A.J.C.

6 May 1982

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