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From the Private Secretary

11 August 1986

Robert Culshaw wrote last week about the handling of the Falkland Islands debate at this year's United Nations General Assembly. The Prime Minister was content with the strategy set out in that minute but has stressed that our statement in the debate should itself be as robust and unequivocal as in previous years, and as envisaged in Robert Culshaw's letter.

TIMOTHY FLESHER

David Reddaway, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

7 August 1986

Rue Murks

Dear Tim

Yes Agree in
MI approach?

Falklands at UNGA

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In the light of last year's experience, the Foreign Secretary proposes to modify our tactics for the Falkland Islands debate at this year's United Nations General Assembly.

Last year the Argentine-inspired resolution on the Falklands was milder in tone than those of previous years. We undertook an energetic and sustained lobbying campaign, pointing out that the resolution's call for negotiations "on all aspects of the future of the Falkland Islands" included sovereignty and that the Argentine position was therefore unchanged. When it became clear that the resolution was nonetheless attracting support, we tabled two amendments stressing the Islanders' right to self-determination. In the event, our amendments were voted down and the resolution was adopted without amendment. The 107 votes in favour, with 4 against and 41 abstentions, marked a significant increase over previous years and was widely interpreted as a victory for Argentina.

The Argentines will no doubt seek to press home their advantage at this year's UNGA; there are already indications that they plan a lobbying campaign aimed at winning over last year's abstainees. Faced with another "soft" resolution, we are likely to find ourselves further isolated. The EC is already split (in 1985, 3 EC nations - France, Italy and Greece - voted for the resolution) and we may face further defections. The drift in Argentina's favour by the Commonwealth, which last year included Australia and Canada, will continue.

Our aim must be to make clear our firm rejection of the Argentine position, and to retain our support wherever possible. We should seek at the same time to down-grade the significance of the UNGA vote. To this end, we intend to switch from our previous policy of

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intensive, across-the-board lobbying which focussed international and media attention on the issue. This was helpful when the Argentines produced a hardline resolution; but counter productive when they opted for a "soft" one in 1985 which attracted wide support. Instead, we propose a policy of carefully targetted lobbying which would be aimed at those nations which joined us last year in voting against the resolution; at other possible supporters; and at those among the 41 abstainees which show any sign of wavering. With the remainder we would make a firm and formal statement of our position in capitals, and would respond to any enquiries. But we should not persist in a high-profile lobbying campaign which might subsequently be labelled a conspicuous failure if the Argentines won more UN votes.

Our overall objective would be thus to reduce the profile of the Falklands issue at UNGA and to keep the debate short. Sir John Thomson's statement would, of course, be as robust and unequivocal as in previous years. And the Falkland Islanders too will put their case at the Fourth Committee, which precedes the plenary session.

This policy of constructive lobbying combined with a reduced profile at UNGA assumes that Argentina will persist with a "soft" resolution. However, we will keep a close eye on Argentine tactics and be ready to adjust our own very swiftly if they look like reverting to a more hardline resolution.

Yours own

(R N Culshaw)
Private Secretary

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John [unclear]

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