



The Rt. Hon. Earl Jellicoe, KBE DSO MC
Chairman

18th October 1988

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*Discussed with
Lord Jellicoe. He
will give a copy
to the Foreign
Secretary. No further
action.*

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

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24/11.*

Dear Charles -

You will remember that we spoke on Tuesday evening about the visit I made to Buenos Aires recently and about my conversation with the former Argentine Ambassador in Washington, Lucio Garcia del Solar. I enclose a copy of my note about this meeting "For your eyes only".

I shall be in touch with you about this after my return from the North of Scotland at the weekend.

All good wishes & love to Carla,

Yours ever

JELlicoe

Jellicoe

Encls.

1st September 1988

AIDE MEMOIRE

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

Juan Eduardo Fleming arranged for me to see the former Argentine Ambassador in Washington, Lucio Garcia del Solar, when I was in Buenos Aires on Tuesday, 23rd August. He now has a position as Director General in the Argentine Ministry of Foreign Affairs dealing, so I was given to believe, with a number of particularly delicate matters. He gave me every reason to believe in the course of the 1½ hour conversation that he enjoys the President Alfonsin's and Foreign Minister Caputo's confidence.

I told the Ambassador the purpose of my visit to Argentina - namely to make contact with McKee del Plata. I mentioned that I had seen Juan Eduardo Fleming (the former Argentine Charge in London) and he did not respond with any particular enthusiasm about him. He did, however, say that he had the highest possible regard for the present Argentine Charge in London who had served under him in Washington.

I told the Ambassador that I was personally very pessimistic about any substantive progress being made in the near future to re-establish Anglo-Argentine relations on a more normal footing. I did, however, feel that there was some possibility of some limited progress in minor matters like student and academic exchanges and perhaps through instituting a Konigswinter-style dialogue. It was, however, desirable that this should be entirely unofficial and non-Governmental. Such a dialogue could do no harm and might just possibly do a little bit of good.

The Ambassador said that he deeply regretted the earlier failure to make progress in the first stages of President Alfonsin's period in office. Progress would have been a great deal easier at that time given the strength of Alfonsin's position then as shown by the imprisonment of the Generals etc. Progress would also have been easier before the Berne debacle. In the Ambassador's view this arose from a certain distrust on both sides and was perhaps due to the misinterpretation (by the English interpreter) of a single word. The Ambassador told me, speaking personally, that if he had been present in Berne he would not have allowed the dialogue to

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break up as it had done. He would have pressed for it to be suspended until the misinterpretation had, or so he would have hoped, been put right. On the Argentine side the failure to do so was perhaps due to a certain lack of confidence and seniority on the part of the officials involved.

The Ambassador went on to say that he certainly believed that the Prime Minister's feelings on the Falklands was stronger than anyone else in Britain. As he put it, "this was certainly the American view". However, he still thought that a real effort to make progress remained very worthwhile and, in answer to my question, he did not feel it was too late in Alfonsin's Presidency for such an effort to be made. Although the Administration was weak on the economic front, Alfonsin himself was still strong both morally and politically. Of course, any agreement which might be reached with the British would inevitably come under attack from the Peronistas. On the whole the Peronistas were much more nationalistic than the Radical Party and indeed contained some wild and xenophobic elements. However if, as was not improbable, the Peronistas were to come to power in the '89 elections, it might be easy for them to place the blame for any Agreement which had been reached fairly and squarely on the Radicals and, thereafter, quite possibly to build on it.

The Ambassador then went on to say that, although the "umbrella formula" had now been agreed, thanks to protracted efforts not least on the part of the Americans, the agenda remained very narrow, being restricted to a) the avoidance of incidents and b) fish stocks etc. However, despite the umbrella, it still might be difficult to avoid difficult areas involving sovereignty. Moreover, even if a limited agreement could be reached it might be very hard to sell it to the Argentine public, especially in a pre-election period. It might well be different with a wider and unrestricted agenda, albeit one still covered by the "umbrella formula". (I mentioned in this context possible topics - so did he - for example, avoidance of incidents, fish stocks, etc but also communications between the Islands and the Mainland, repatriation of the Argentine dead, trade, academic and professional exchanges, the reinstatement of the Cultural Agreement, the reopening of the British Council and so on.)

The Ambassador's strong view was that an attempt to reach an agreement on an unrestricted agenda was well worth a try and that it was not too late for

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this. He disclosed to me, very confidentially, that four or five months ago President Alfonsin, Foreign Minister Caputo, he and one or two others had seriously considered sending a personal message to Mrs Thatcher, via the Ambassador, stressing the desire of the President for better Anglo-Argentine relations and the need for direct talks etc. The text had not been finally agreed, but the tentative idea had been that the message should be personally delivered to Lord Thomas by he, the Ambassador, possibly in a "neutral" country like France.

Unfortunately, before the idea could be taken further there came the much publicised UK military exercises. There had of course been some doubt on the Argentine side whether a message of this sort might be risky, and inviting a snub from the Prime Minister, given the fact that the President's message of goodwill after Mrs T's re-election had apparently not received any acknowledgement.

In sum, the Ambassador was doubtful whether agreement would be reached on the narrow agenda and, if reached, could be successfully sold to the Argentine public. He felt, however, that provided it was covered by the existing "umbrella" (both sides reserving their rights on the sovereignty issue) agreement to talks with a wider but undefined agenda could well produce results. At the very least it could prove to be a confidence-building factor. He said that he would mention our conversation to the Foreign Minister and said that any communication from me arising from it should be via the Argentine Charge in London. He was very well trained and discreet. He said that he would have no objection to my mentioning our conversation to Lord Thomas and/or Charles Powell and/or Sir Geoffrey Howe.

JELlicoe