

cc - speech folder
Press
C. King

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, IT GIVES ME GREAT

PLEASURE TO REPLY, ON BEHALF OF MY DISTINGUISHED

(1)

FELLOW GUESTS, TO ADMIRAL STAVELEY'S KIND WORDS

OF WELCOME; AND IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE, TOO, TO BE

BACK AT NORTHWOOD AGAIN THIS EVENING.

THIS HEADQUARTERS HOLDS VIVID MEMORIES FOR ME.

I SHOULD START BY APOLOGISING THAT WE COULD NOT HOLD THIS

FALKLANDS DINNER ON THE DATE ORIGINALLY ARRANGED

IN MAY.

/ I WAS THEN

I WAS THEN INVOLVED IN ANOTHER CAMPAIGN - OF A
POLITICAL NATURE - AND I AM GLAD TO SAY THAT THAT
CAMPAIGN TOO HAD A SUCCESSFUL OUTCOME.

AS WE DROVE THROUGH THE GATES THIS EVENING, I COULD NOT HELP

RECALLING MY FIRST VISIT.

IT WAS IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE FALKLANDS CAMPAIGN -
DAYS OF INTENSE ACTIVITY AT EVERY LEVEL OF GOVERN-
MENT, DAYS OF UNCERTAINTY TEMPERED WITH EXCITEMENT
AND ANXIETY, AND ABOVE ALL DAYS OF DETERMINATION
TO RIGHT THE WRONG DONE TO OUR PEOPLE IN THE
FALKLAND ISLANDS.

/ IT WAS

IT WAS LORD LEWIN - SIR TERENCE LEWIN AS HE THEN WAS - WHO
FIRST ACCOMPANIED ME TO NORTHWOOD, AND IT WAS
SIR JOHN FIELDHOUSE WHO WELCOMED ME ON THAT AND
SUBSEQUENT OCCASIONS.

I WAS IMMEDIATELY GLAD THAT I HAD COME.

2c
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IT WAS ST. GEORGE'S DAY, THE DAY WHEN WE HAD
ISSUED OUR WARNING TO ARGENTINA THAT WE WOULD NOT
HESITATE TO DEAL WITH ANY ATTEMPT TO INTERFERE
WITH THE TASK FORCE.

/ SPECULATION

SPECULATION WAS MOUNTING, IN THE MEDIA AND IN DIPLOMATIC
CIRCLES, AS TO WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT: WHAT THE
OUTCOME WOULD BE; THE PROSPECTS FOR A PEACEFUL
SETTLEMENT; THE DANGERS OF A CONFLICT ESCALATING
OUT OF CONTROL.

THAT WAS THE ATMOSPHERE I LEFT BEHIND IN LONDON.

THE ATMOSPHERE AT NORTHWOOD CAME AS A WELCOME TONIC.

ON OUR ARRIVAL, I HAD A FULL PRESENTATION ON THE

OVERALL SITUATION FROM ADMIRAL FIELDHOUSE.

/ HE THEN

HE THEN ESCORTED ME AROUND THE FACILITIES HERE
TO SEE HOW THAT SITUATION WAS BEING HANDLED IN
ALL ITS DIFFERENT ASPECTS.

EVEN THOUGH THIS WAS ONLY AT THE OUTSET OF THE
CAMPAIGN, AND OUR COUNTER-ATTACK HAD YET TO BEGIN,
THE LEVEL OF ACTIVITY WAS INTENSE, YET NEVER
FRENETIC.

THE ATMOSPHERE WAS OVERRIDINGLY ONE OF QUIET
EFFICIENCY; OF CONFIDENCE AND DETERMINATION;
ABOVE ALL, OF PROFESSIONALISM.

/ THE IMPRESSIONS

THE IMPRESSIONS OF THAT FIRST GUIDED TOUR ARE NOT EASILY

FORGOTTEN:

- THE LONG, NARROW SHIP-LIKE PASSAGES
CONNECTING DOZENS OF CABINS;

- MAPS AND CHARTS TO BE PORED OVER AND
MARKED WITH PROGRESS AND PROJECTIONS;

- THE MEN AND WOMEN IN DARK BLUE, LIGHT
BLUE AND KHAKI, ALL ABLE TO TAKE THE TIME
TO TELL ME WHAT THEY WERE DOING.

/ IT WAS AN

TWO DAYS EARLIER, TWO HELICOPTERS HAD BEEN LOST
IN APPALLING WEATHER CONDITIONS ON SOUTH GEORGIA.
ONLY HEROIC FLYING HAD ENABLED THE SAS PARTY ON
THE ISLAND TO BE RETRIEVED.

DURING THAT FIRST VISIT, I LEARNT THAT A SEA KING
HAD HAD TO DITCH IN THE SEA, AND AN ARGENTINE
SUBMARINE HAD BEEN DETECTED NEAR SOUTH GEORGIA.
NEVERTHELESS, ON THAT SAME DAY, THE SAS WERE
REINSERTED INTO SOUTH GEORGIA, AND THE FINAL STAGE
OF THE RECOVERY OF THE ISLAND WAS INITIATED.

/ ON MY NEXT VISIT,

ON MY NEXT VISIT, THE CAMPAIGN WAS A GOOD DEAL MORE ADVANCED
AND THE 'HOLE', AS I HAD COME TO KNOW IT, WAS
CONSIDERABLY MORE CROWDED.

IT WAS AN IMPORTANT STAGE IN THE CAMPAIGN: THE SUCCESSFUL
LANDINGS IN SAN CARLOS HAD TAKEN PLACE ABOUT
24 HOURS BEFORE AND THE BEACHHEAD WAS BEING
REINFORCED IN THE TEETH OF FIERCE OPPOSITION
FROM THE AIR.

/ THE DAMAGE INFLICTED

THE DAMAGE INFLICTED ON BOTH SIDES REACHED A PEAK,
WITH THE BRUNT OF THE ARGENTINE AIR RAIDS BEING
BORNE BY THE SHIPS IN THE FALKLAND SOUND, THREE
OF WHICH WERE HIT DIRECTLY BY BOMBS.

IT WAS NOT A MOMENT FOR DOUBTS OR DIFFERENCES; AND I WAS
GREATLY HEARTENED TO SEE FOR MYSELF THAT MORALE
AT NORTHWOOD WAS, IF ANYTHING, EVEN HIGHER THAN
IT HAD BEEN ON MY PREVIOUS VISIT.

MORE PEOPLE WERE NEEDED AS THE CAMPAIGN PROGRESSED,
AND OFFICE SPACE WAS EVEN SCARCER.

/ THIS WAS PUTTING

I AM SURE THAT I SPEAK FOR ALL OF US WHEN I SAY
HOW GRATEFUL WE ARE FOR THE MAGNIFICENT AND
UNSTINTING SUPPORT GIVEN BY OUR NATO FRIENDS AND
PARTNERS THROUGHOUT THE CAMPAIGN.

DURING THE FALKLANDS CAMPAIGN, THIS WAS MY FRONT LINE: THIS
HEADQUARTERS WAS THE NEAREST I COULD GET TO THE
SOUTH ATLANTIC, AND I GREATLY PRIZED THE SENSE OF
BEING IN DIRECT CONTACT WITH THE MEN IN THE
TASK FORCE.

/ NONE OF MY

NONE OF MY QUESTIONS - AND I ASKED A GOOD MANY -
EVER FAILED TO RECEIVE A STRAIGHTFORWARD AND
POSITIVE ANSWER.

NOR WAS I EVER AWARE OF ANY SENSE OF RIVALRY OR
DISSENSION AMONGST THE DIFFERENT STAFFS HERE,
DESPITE THE PRESSURES OF WORK AND SPACE UNDER
WHICH THEY LABOURED TWENTY-FOUR HOURS A DAY.

OBVIOUSLY THIS COULD NOT HAVE BEEN SO WITHOUT THE VERY CLOSE
COOPERATION BETWEEN THE THREE SERVICES.

/ NOT FOR NOTHING

NOT FOR NOTHING WAS THE OPERATION CALLED
CORPORATE.

BUT I KNOW THAT GREAT CREDIT IS DUE ALSO TO
HMS WARRIOR, AND THE SUPPORTING STAFF WHO WERE
CONCERNED WITH THE DOMESTIC AND OFFICE ARRANGEMENTS
FOR THE INFLUX OF ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL.

WHATEVER WAS TRUE OF THE EARLY AND MIDDLE STAGES OF THE
CAMPAIGN WAS DOUBLY TRUE OF THE LAST DAYS, THE DAYS
OF GENERAL MOORE'S FINAL PUSH TO PORT STANLEY.

/ I WAS ABLE

I WAS ABLE TO BE HERE ON BOTH THE SATURDAY AND SUNDAY.

I COULD NOT HAVE STAYED AWAY.

THROUGHOUT THE BATTLE, THE ADVANCES AND THE
SETBACKS, MY CONFIDENCE NEVER WAVERED, AND I KNOW
HOW WELL SERVED THIS NATION WAS FROM START TO
FINISH NOT ONLY BY THE OFFICERS AND MEN ON THE
GROUND, IN THE AIR AND AT SEA, TO WHOM SO MUCH IS
OWED, BUT ALSO BY THE MEN AND WOMEN HERE AT
NORTHWOOD.

/ THE WORK, OF COURSE.

THE WORK, OF COURSE, STILL GOES ON, HERE AS IN THE FALKLANDS
THEMSELVES, WHERE THE WORK OF REBUILDING THE FUTURE
OF THE ISLANDS IS TAKING PLACE.

THE SERVICES ARE PLAYING THEIR FULL PART, BOTH IN
THE DEFENCE OF THE ISLANDS AND THEIR PEOPLE AND IN
THEIR EQUALLY IMPORTANT ROLE OF PARTICIPATING IN
ISLAND LIFE.

/ UNDERLYING ALL

UNDERLYING ALL THESE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF INVOLVEMENT WITH
THE CIVIL POPULATION IS THE MORE SOMBRE AND MORE
PURELY MILITARY ROLE OF BEING PREPARED, IF
NECESSARY, TO DEFEND ONCE MORE THE ISLANDS AND
THE PEOPLE WHICH WE FOUGHT SO HARD AND SO
EFFECTIVELY TO RECOVER LAST YEAR.

I KNOW FROM MY OWN VISIT TO THE FALKLANDS EARLIER IN THE YEAR
THAT SERVICE IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC IS DEMANDING
AND RIGOROUS.

/ BUT I WAS HEARTENED

BUT I WAS HEARTENED TO SEE HOW WELL OUR
SAILORS, SOLDIERS AND AIRMEN ARE RISING TO THE
CHALLENGE.

WE ARE ALL GREATLY IN THEIR DEBT.

MR. PRESIDENT, MY FERVENT HOPE - THE HOPE OF EACH OF US -
IS THAT NEITHER THOSE NOW STATIONED IN THE
FALKLAND ISLANDS, NOR ANY OF YOU, WILL BE CALLED
ON TO PERFORM AGAIN THE SERVICE SO LOYALLY
RENDERED LAST YEAR.

/ BUT I HAVE NO DOUBTS

BUT I HAVE NO DOUBTS WHATSOEVER THAT SHOULD IT,
DESPITE OUR BEST EFFORTS, BECOME NECESSARY AGAIN
TO ORGANISE FOR A FIGHT, WHETHER IN THE SOUTH
ATLANTIC OR ANYWHERE ELSE, WE WILL BE ABLE TO
COUNT ON OUR SERVICES TO PROVIDE THE DEDICATION
AND EXPERTISE TO FIGHT AND WIN ANOTHER DAY.