

30 April 1982

Policy Unit

PRIME MINISTER

ADVICE ON ARGENTINA AND THE FALKLANDS

The attached letter from Ray Whitney is self-explanatory.

As you know, I have the highest possible regard for Ray (as both he and I have for Hugh Thomas).

I am not qualified to judge whether Ray's concern is justified. All I can do is stress the obvious points: Ray is totally loyal to you and to what you are trying to do; he is not by nature, by any stretch of imagination, an "appeaser"; he has worked in the Foreign Office, with direct extensive personal experience of Argentina; it is not in his nature to criticise people behind their backs or to indulge in petty intrigue; it is in his nature to speak up, however hostile the reception, if he believes that it is necessary.

Add to all this that, despite his Foreign Office background (and quite extensive military service, I seem to remember) he is no supporter of the mandarin. Indeed, he has himself strongly argued the case for reform, Cabinet Office reconstruction etc, as you know.

My feeling is that you should have a long enough chat with him in order to see whether he has points to make which are valid and may be missing from the advice you are getting.*

*

In the light of Argentina's reported acceptance of Security Council's resolution, this last paragraph now superfluous. But Ray's letter may still stand in general terms. (It is interesting that Ray told me last night that he believed the Argentines would back off at the last moment.)


JOHN HOSKYNS

If it is convenient - a
~~the~~ wonderful note
on which to leave
No 10! My
congratulations.

RAY WHITNEY, O.B.E., M.P.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

PERSONAL

30th April 1982

John Hoskyns, Esq.,
10, Downing Street,
London SW1.

Dear John.

I write this letter with the greatest reluctance as it could easily appear to be peevish or even self-seeking. But I am seriously worried that the Prime Minister has an inaccurate appreciation of the real situation in Argentina - which, if I am right, could have very serious implications. Know your enemy, as we used to be taught!

My misgivings arise principally from some of the things the Prime Minister said when we happened to have a drink together one evening last week. It was not an occasion for a serious exchange but some of her remarks seemed to be based on what I believe to be a partial and inadequate assessment of the current position in Argentina.

It happened that the following day I was discussing Argentina with Hugh Thomas and found him making the points I had heard the night before. He then made it clear that the Prime Minister's views were likely to reflect his own briefing. It seemed to me that his assessment was based, to a significant extent, on a book written over ten years ago by an American friend of mine, about the origins of the Argentine military. It happens to be only one factor in a complex situation and one very easy to get out of proportion.

I wonder what Hugh is telling her after his visit to China? None of us can be experts on every country.

I recognise that the Prime Minister feels the need for alternative and additional briefing to that provided by the Foreign Office. I am sure that is necessary - as it is

.../...

John Hoskyns, Esq.,
30th April 1982

.../...

necessary for her to have second opinions on what is put forward by all the other major Departments of State. Indeed, one of the main objectives of the proposals I submitted to her some time ago on a strengthened and restructured Cabinet Office was precisely to meet this requirement.

I should be most grateful for any advice you may have (on your last day in your present job!) on how it would be best to play this. Hugh is, I believe, well aware of my concern. I greatly esteem him as an historian and value him as a friend - one I should hate very much to lose. But the most important thing must surely be to ensure that the Prime Minister is getting the best possible advice.

You did a great job and I have much enjoyed our relationship. Bonne chance, as I believe those wets in the Foreign Office say!

Yours ever,
Ray.