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17 May 1987

*From the Private Secretary*

At dinner on Saturday night, I found myself talking to Juan Eduardo Fleming, the Head of the Argentine Interest Section in London. I had not known that he was going to be at the dinner, given by Carol Price's brother, and indeed did not discover who he was until we had been talking for some minutes.

Fleming was almost pathetically anxious to convey some thoughts about relations between Britain and Argentina. It was a great pity that we had not adjusted our policy to take account of the democratic nature of the present Argentine government. He hoped that, after the elections, the Prime Minister would feel able to make some dramatic gesture such as meeting President Alfonsin. He drew a parallel between this idea and President Sadat's meeting at Camp David with Mr. Begin. The present Argentine government fully understood that there was no question of making progress in the near term on the question of sovereignty over the Falklands. They wanted to talk to us about broader issues of our relations, on the basis that both sides maintained their positions on the question of sovereignty.

I said that most of what he proposed was impractical and failed to take account of the history of Argentine aggression against the Falklands and the impact of this both on the islanders and on public opinion here. It remained a very emotional issue. As he knew, we remained ready to talk about practical improvements in relations, provided it was clear that sovereignty was not for discussion. The indirect contacts taking place on fisheries conservation were an example of how progress might be made.

Fleming said that he was very anxious to have a further informal talk. I said that obviously there was no question of seeing him in the office or indeed having any contact during an Election campaign in this country. I did not rule out the possibility of talking informally in the margins of a social occasion once the election was over. I would think about that.



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I only trouble you with this because there must be a risk that he will give it a rather different gloss in his own reporting.

(CHARLES POWELL)

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