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a/sir PC

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

12 September 1988

From the Private Secretary

**POSSIBLE MEETING BETWEEN THE FOREIGN SECRETARY AND THE
ARGENTINE FOREIGN MINISTER**

Thank you for your letter about the possible need for the Foreign Secretary to pay a brief courtesy call on the Argentine Foreign Minister in New York in the event that Sr. Caputo is elected President of the United Nations General Assembly. The Prime Minister has commented that she utterly recoils from this and thinks that the families of those who lost their lives in the Falklands War would do so too, especially since Argentina has still not announced a cessation of hostilities.

C. D. POWELL

R. N. Pierce, Esq.,
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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10 DOWNING STREET

Prime Minister

Reply
later
A

I must say
this rather sticks
in my gullet.
I don't see why we
have to offer to
call on representatives
of a country which
is still technically at
war with us. But perhaps
I am old-fashioned!
CAP/STP

cc/c ①



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

Prime Minister

8 September 1988

The Foreign Secretary proposes to offer to pay a call on the Argentine Foreign Minister in his capacity as President of the UN General Assembly. Agree?

1 utterly recall from this, and so I think would be the relations of all those who lost their lives in the Falklands. Argentina has not announced a

Dear Charles

Possible Meeting with the Argentine Foreign Minister at the UN General Assembly

cessation of hostilities

There is strong possibility that Senor Caputo, the Argentine Foreign Minister, may be elected President of the UN General Assembly on 20 September. The Foreign Secretary will as usual be visiting the Assembly, from 25 to 30 September. In the normal course of events he would automatically pay a courtesy call on the President. This year, if Senor Caputo is elected, the case for such a call is naturally not automatic.

The easiest option would appear to be not to bother about a courtesy call at all. But this is not a cost free option. It would certainly be noticed in New York, and regarded as both a slight on the office of President and as an indication of an unconstructive approach towards Argentina. The Argentines (and others) could be relied upon to play up these points, if only to strengthen their own hand for the ritual Falklands debate which is likely to be in November.

In contrast, offering to pay such a call would provide us with some presentational opportunities. If Senor Caputo refuses, as he might, we would automatically have the advantage, and could play it up accordingly if we wanted to. If he accepts, it will enable us to demonstrate that it is perfectly possible to have normal and sensible contacts on matters of mutual interest with Argentina, provided sovereignty over the Falklands is kept off the table. Even if Senor Caputo were to raise the Falklands, the Foreign Secretary could make our position quite clear (yes to more normal relations; no to discussion of Falklands sovereignty) without entering into substantive discussion. We could say publicly that this was what had happened, if need be (for example if it led to public or media speculation of a "breakthrough" over the Falklands). We could also use such an occasion to advantage with the Americans, as further proof of our constructive intentions toward Argentina.

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The Foreign Secretary accordingly proposes to offer to pay a brief courtesy call on Senor Caputo, in his capacity as President of the UNGA. He will instruct the Governor in Port Stanley to reassure Falkland Island Councillors of the formal nature of any meeting before it takes place. He will, of course, give careful thought to the press handling of the call.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries of OD members and to Trevor Woolley.

Yours ever

Robert

(R N Peirce)
Private Secretary

C D Powell Esq
10 Downing Street

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