

cc M.A.S.

**SUBJECT**

RECORD OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND SIR ANTHONY PARSONS, THE UK REPRESENTATIVE AT THE UNITED NATIONS, AT \_\_\_\_\_ HOURS ON SUNDAY 18 APRIL 1982

PM: ... are you at home or at work?

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Sir A. Parsons: I'm at home, Prime Minister.

PM: Oh, I'm sorry to bother you.

Sir A. Parsons: For the moment. I'll be back at work in a few hours.

PM: Yes. I'm not urging you to go back to work, I'm merely sorry if I've caught you at home.

Sir A. Parsons: No, not at all, I'm kind of working at home.

PM: Yes. Look, I don't like, first the idea of a Resolution, I wanted to have a word with you about. And secondly, the terms of it, I think, will put us in acute difficulties at home. First the idea of a resolution. Is it possible to have one that is not in fact amended because it seems to me the moment we go in with one they will have some kind of amendment urging us not to use force.

Sir A. Parsons: Well Prime Minister, my view until a couple of days ago was and I think still is, that unless we go in with something on the lines that I suggested and you obviously don't like very much, whenever it was, yesterday, that we haven't got a hope. Not a hope in hell of taking an initiative which will not immediately bring about an amendment telling us to drop anchor.

PM: Yes, well now look. This can either be passed, in which case I must tell you the paragraphs, some of the paragraphs, would be devastating. Or it can be rejected. In which case it seems to me that we're worst off, worse off than we were before. Or it can be vetoed in which case it seems to me that we're worse off than we were before.

Sir A. Parsons: Well, Prime Minister, this has been my view as I said to you at lunch a week ago. I mean, I produced this as a kind

of desperate last-ditch possibility to retain the initiative. But my view is that, I've been thinking about it all day, I've got a meeting with my staff in a few hours' time, that really we would tactically be better advised not to take the initiative now. Because any move we make will produce precisely that, if we try to involve the Secretary General or a Security Council Commission or anything short of a full solution which we can accept as it were, we will immediately get an amendment which calls on us to drop anchor, to turn round, to hold off as it were which obviously we couldn't accept. Now, my feeling is that if we just go on stalling as I've been doing for the last week, and let somebody else take the initiative, whenever they do, I mean if and when Haig is finished, well then we've still got quite a lot of room for manoeuvre. Because the initiative will be taken essentially by do-gooders and there will be quite a lot of room for negotiating and trying to amend, etc., etc., before anything actually comes to a vote. We may eventually be cornered but we could probably keep the ball rolling for quite a few days before that happened. And I think that could be better than our taking an initiative which might immediately rebound on us.

PM: Well I'm very worried. Because what this does, with its suggestion for the United Nations role, is to preclude us from really carrying out our duty to the Falkland Islanders. What it does is serve notice that we are washing our hands of them in the interim period insofar as looking after them, advising them, being there to be with them. I'm just staggered. For a period of x years we're just going to walk away from them. And just depend on a piece of paper - that's what they had to depend on before. I don't think we're entitled to do that.

Sir A. Parsons: Well, as I said. The only reason why I produced that suggestion was really to illustrate the only conceivable way in which we could take an initiative here.

PM: I think what we've got in that is unacceptable things or things that would prejudice our negotiating hand in the future. Really seriously prejudice them.

Sir A. Parsons: Well, I mean, I don't dissent from that at all. I mean I think all I'm saying is that I think that is the only

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kind of initiative we could take ... which is acceptable, then we must do it the other way round as it were. Go on keeping other people out of the Council for as long as we can and fight it off as best we can when somebody else takes the initiative.

PM: Why is it not possible just to bring to the notice of the Security Council that there has been absolutely no attempt to comply with their Resolution?

Sir A. Parsons: Well, we can do that all right. But again, if we try to introduce a Resolution which simply, for example, says reaffirms the previous one, deplors the fact that it hasn't been carried out by Argentina and calls on them to do so, we will immediately get a paragraph introduced which calls on us to drop anchor, which calls for some kind of UN mediation and all that kind of thing.

PM: But aren't we going to get that anyway if we move to introduce one. If I were devil's advocate on the other side that's precisely what I would do and I would be delighted that we, Great Britain, had seized the initiative because it would give me on the other side the chance, the tactical chance, to put something down totally unacceptable to us and then we would be in the position of having to withdraw or we couldn't veto.

Sir A. Parsons: This is exactly my feeling. If we cannot take an initiative which actually, as it were, produces some kind of system to solve the thing which would be acceptable to us and it's evident from what you say that we can't do that.

PM: Well the idea that we should just opt out for three years seems to me utterly appalling.

Sir A. Parsons: Well in that case then I think we must not take any initiative. I mean we're better off to, as it were, receive the enemy's fire and do the best we can to ..

PM: Well, I'm phoning really to get your impressions because I thought I'd - certainly the one we got this morning, today, is different from the one we had yesterday, but it still to me serves

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notice to the Falkland Islanders that, look for x years we are not going to be there. You're going to have to administer everything yourselves. Leaves aside the very difficult thing about the dependencies which as you know are administered through the Executive Council and the Governor. And that can't be done this way. When it says the Falkland Islands shall administer their own affairs that presumably means through the Legislative Council, what precisely the functions of the Executive Council is with regard to the Falkland Islanders' own affairs and the Governor, I don't know. I don't even know whether it's possible. What I do know is that with the dependencies the Legislative Council has no standing at all, it's purely the Executive Council and the Governor because the dependencies are wholly separate from the Falklands. Well now all of these, it seems to me, have not been worked out in the drafting of this Resolution. I don't want anything come out which compromises us or ties our hands. We're discussing it again tomorrow but the impression which I have, I had yesterday and I have today, is that it serves notice whereas we said in the House of Commons that our objective is to restore British administration as soon as possible. What this does is virtually say for three years I'm going to walk away from it and you must cope with yourselves. And you're going to have some United Nations guy there who will absolutely protect you from anyone landing, although everyone knows he can't possibly, and it just doesn't seem to me to be practicable. But what it does and obviously it's drafted on the belief that it will be totally and utterly rejected, what it does it seems to me it does exactly what giving notice to withdraw Endurance did. Gives notice that our resolution is not as good, our determination to look after them is not as great as they thought it was. And I assure you it is. However, we'll talk about it tomorrow morning but I just wanted - because you were so strong to me when I last saw you, look for heaven's sake don't get back into there, the United Nations, you will never get such a good Resolution as you've got now and those words I've sort of taken and they've become part of the ten commandments practically. And I believe that they were true.

Sir A. Parsons: I don't go back on any of that. I mean the only reason I sent that telegram was, I wasn't urging a course of action which would mean that we opted out. I was simply trying to

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illustrate the only kind of initiative which we could reasonably, and I use the word initiative with great emphasis, the only kind of initiative which we could take in the Council now and get away with.

PM: When you say get away with, what do you mean.

Sir A. Parsons: Well, I mean get away with without immediately tying our hands. Because if we went in with anything else, if we simply went in with a very short Resolution urging the Argentines, or demanding that they immediately fulfil the previous Resolution we would precipitate precisely what we don't want. Which is, they call on us to drop anchor and all the rest of it.

PM: I would have thought an actual Resolution, that any Resolution would precipitate that.

Sir A. Parsons: Well, that is what I feel. I mean I tried to illustrate the only way in which we could keep the initiative here. I mean I don't believe we can. I think that if that is unacceptable to you, which I absolutely understand, then our best course is not to take any initiative here and simply to try to beat off the do-gooders etc for as long as we can.

PM: Yes, well we're discussing it again tomorrow morning but I'm not keen on it.

Sir A. Parsons: Well, I'm going to send another telegram tonight. In which, I've already made up my mind, I made up my mind an hour or so ago what I'm going to say, and I'm simply going to say that if this proposition is unacceptable as I understand it to be, from our point of view, I'm not urging it, then I strongly recommend that we should forget about any question of taking the initiative ourselves in the UN. Because whatever else we do, it's going to bring, it's going to precipitate precisely the call on us which we don't want and can't accept. Therefore, we should sit tight, I should continue to beat people off as I've managed to do for the last week and then we will manoeuvre as skillfully as we can when somebody else does take an initiative. Which I think is not going to be far away.

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PM: No, I'm sure it isn't. But I don't want, we have a very strong position now and I do not want us, by our own efforts, to weaken it. And that's my fear. Nor indeed do I want us, by putting forward a Resolution like this to weaken our ultimate negotiating hand. Nor do I really want anything which says to the Falkland Islanders, look you've only got a piece of paper to defend you because I think people would laugh at that here. And absolutely no way in this Resolution are we seeing that no force comes to invade them again. If we have a major peace-keeping force or we were unable to get the United States to guarantee its security, but there's no way, they can come down, they can land in helicopters, in Hercules on the runway and have another major invasion and then we really should look stupid.

Sir A. Parsons: I entirely agree.

PM: So that's the weakness, one of the weaknesses of this thing. I haven't yet discussed it again with Francis but I did say to him that I would like to phone you so he knows that. We'll have another go at it tomorrow but I'm not likely to change my mind I think because I think that there are so many shortcomings ...

Sir A. Parsons: I just want to make clear that, I mean, I'm not as it were urging on you a change of course. No question of that. All I'm trying to do is to illustrate the only conceivable way in which we could ...

PM: Well/I understand it. Last night when we discussed it, I took one look at it and said well I suppose this is Foreign Office. I really can't think Sir Anthony Parsons would have put this forward and they said, oh yes, this is his advice. It's not your advice. What you are saying is if you want us to take an initiative it's only that kind of thing that would succeed. That's a totally different story.

Sir A. Parsons: Exactly, I must admit that makes it sound different. All I'm saying is this is the only way in which we could take an initiative here. If we can't do that, well then anything else that we try to do here off our own bat as it were as an initiative would only invite precisely the situation we don't want.

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PM; Some of my opponents are saying all right you must go back to the United Nations, it's their reputation which is in issue. Well, goodness me, it's been an issue for about the last 30-35 years.

Sir A. Parsons: That, from these kind of people is just idle talk. If we go back to the United Nations, I mean there was a suggestion to me from the office, I don't know where it came from, that we might think of some involvement of the Secretary General and the Security Council Commission and so on and I said no this is absolutely out of the question, it will simply tie our hands and bring us all to a standstill as it were and create what I described as dangerous drift.

PM: Well, my view is that if Al Haig can't secure withdrawal of the Argentines then a second Resolution like this won't.

Sir A. Parsons: No, that's quite true. I think one thing, Prime Minister, I should mention while we're on the subject, which I haven't actually brought into my telegrams so far, is that if Haig fails, it's very important that we should stop the Americans taking some initiative in the Security Council. Because the general expectation here in the Council among the other members is that if the Haig mission collapses that the Americans will as it were report to the Security Council. Now if that happens, we're very soon going to get into precisely the situation which we don't want to have, and we'll find ourselves having to vote the opposite way to the Americans.

PM: Yes, he wasn't appointed by the Security Council in any way.

Sir A. Parsons: Oh no, but I think there would be pressures within their own organisation to kind of obviscate the issue, you know putting in some kind of report to the Council, calling for a Council meeting describing what happened and then you know urging restraint on everybody.

PM: Yes, they do love keeping people under occupation don't they. If restraint at this stage means to keep people under occupation under a regime that has absolutely no record whatsoever of any  
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kind of decency towards their own people. This is the stupidity of urging restraint after an invasion, is to play into the invaders' hands. They'll be killed in the rush with invaders if that is what's going to happen.

Sir A. Parsons: Well, I've just been watching quite a serious talk show on the TV here and I think that generally speaking, you know, everybody's on our side still.

PM: They are because we are showing some courage and resolution trying to stop an invader.

Sir A. Parsons: Prime Minister, I would like to make one point, don't worry about my morale.

PM: Well, I do worry about your morale but I just wondered the precise nature of the advice because I have no department here and I'm just jolly well realising that I need a department. I have no department and therefore I have to rely on third-hand hearsay and I don't like it.

Sir A. Parsons: Advice is the wrong word - it was simply an illustration of the only type of initiative which I thought that we could actually ...

PM: Might succeed, only might. All right, I've got it, I've got the message. We'll have a look at it again tomorrow morning but it seems to me ...

Sir A. Parsons: There'll be another telegram from me½

PM: Good, all right, sorry to have bothered you.