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OD(SA)(82) 6th Meeting

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CABINET

DEFENCE AND OVERSEA POLICY COMMITTEE

SUB-COMMITTEE ON THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND
THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

—
MINUTES of a Meeting held at
10 Downing Street on
TUESDAY 13 APRIL 1982 at 4.20 pm
—

PRESENT

The Rt Hon Margaret Thatcher MP
Prime Minister

The Rt Hon William Whitelaw MP
Secretary of State for the
Home Department

The Rt Hon Francis Pym MP
Secretary of State for
Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

The Rt Hon John Nott MP
Secretary of State for Defence

The Rt Hon Cecil Parkinson MP
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster
and Paymaster General

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT

Admiral of the Fleet
Sir Terence Lewin
Chief of the Defence Staff

Sir Antony Acland
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

SECRETARIAT

Sir Robert Armstrong
Mr R L Wade-Gery
Mr D H Colvin
Captain J Raymond

SUBJECT

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SITUATION IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

Previous Reference: OD(SA)(82) 5th Meeting

THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH SECRETARY said that he had just returned from a further meeting with the United States Secretary of State, Mr Haig, who would shortly be leaving London. He would say publicly before his departure that he had received new ideas which the parties were considering; that meanwhile he would be returning to Washington to report to President Reagan; and that he would be visiting Buenos Aires shortly thereafter. Mr Haig had told him at their meeting that in the course of the day he had persuaded the Argentinians to drop the five demands which he had reported to the Prime Minister that morning. They also seemed ready to accept the crucial fifth paragraph of the draft Agreed Memorandum worked out by the Prime Minister and Mr Haig the previous day (OD(SA)(82) 10). But they were insisting on a change in its eighth paragraph. To meet this, Mr Haig was considering the following possible formulation -

"8. December 31, 1982, will conclude the interim period and, during this period, the signatories shall negotiate the conditions of the decolonization and definitive status of the islands, consistent with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XX), and the 1964 Report of the Special Committee of the General Assembly on the situation with regard to the implementation of the declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples."

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up the discussion, said that an alternative British redraft of paragraph 8 of the draft Agreed Memorandum should now be prepared for early consideration by the Sub-Committee. This should cover points of importance to Britain, such as the possibility that the proposed negotiations might fail to agree on a definitive settlement by the end of 1982, as well as the new point now raised by the Americans. If there were a renewed crisis at the end of 1982, it might be necessary to arrange that the United States observers should be reinforced and empowered to take on a military role in guarding the Port Stanley airfield.

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The reference to decolonisation in the latest American draft would not be easy to accept. The term could certainly not be used by Government spokesmen in the course of the debate when Parliament reconvened in emergency session on 14 April. She would need to give further consideration to the Government's stance on that occasion, in consultation with the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Defence Secretary. It would not be possible to describe the diplomatic situation in any detail, and it would need to be made clear how fluid this remained. But it should be re-emphasised that the withdrawal of Argentine forces and the paramountcy of the wishes of the Islanders were central to the Government's position. It would probably be necessary also to make clear that the Government were continuing to seek the restoration of British administration; but care would need to be taken over how this was expressed, given that the restoration envisaged in the draft Agreed Memorandum would not extend to the return of a British Governor with normal powers. On the military side it would be useful to draw attention in Parliament to certain steps which were being taken to reinforce the air strength and amphibious capability of the British Task Group.

The Sub-Committee -

1. Invited the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to prepare one or more possible redrafts of paragraph 8 of the draft Memorandum attached to OD(SA)(82) 10.
2. Took note that the Prime Minister would give further consideration to the stance which the Government should adopt in Parliament on 14 April.
3. Agreed to resume their discussion at 9.30 am on 15 April.

Cabinet Office

14 April 1982

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