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OD(SA)(82) 5th 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
MONDAY 12 APRIL 1982 at 11.00 am

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

Sir Ian Sinclair
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

SECRETARIAT

Sir Robert Armstrong
Mr R L Wade-Gery
Mr D H Colvin
Brigadier J A C G Eyre

SUBJECT

SITUATION IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

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SITUATION IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

The Sub-Committee considered the proposals for a settlement being put forward by the United States Secretary of State, Mr Haig. Initially they were given an oral account of these by the Prime Minister. The meeting then adjourned to permit further discussions to take place with Mr Haig and his advisers; when it reconvened, at 3.45 pm, the Sub-Committee had before them the text of Mr Haig's proposals as they then stood, which had been examined by officials and have since been circulated under a Note by the Secretaries (OD(SA)(82) 9). In the light of their deliberations a revised version of this text was agreed between Mr Haig and British Ministers later that evening; this revised document has also since been circulated under a Note by the Secretaries (OD(SA)(82) 10).

THE PRIME MINISTER, summing up both parts of the Sub-Committee's discussion, said that Mr Haig's initiative for a diplomatic settlement was clearly to be welcomed. The proposals which he had tabled were broadly acceptable and could be defended in Parliament, albeit with some difficulty in certain respects. But for this to be possible a number of important modifications of the draft would need to be agreed with Mr Haig later that day. For example, the areas to be demilitarised should be more precisely defined; local police should not be covered by the demilitarisation; the total number of each Special Commissioner's staff should be limited; representation of the Argentine population of the Falkland Islands on the Executive and Legislative Councils should be proportionate to their numbers, subject to their not having less than one representative on each Council; and care should be taken to preserve the principle that the Special Commission's proposals on travel, transportation, communications and trade would have the status of recommendations, on which decisions could not be taken without the agreement of the British and Argentine Governments or (as appropriate) of the Executive and Legislative Councils. As regards the British Task Force now on its way to the South Atlantic, no undertaking could be given that it would be halted (much less turned back) during the period of withdrawal from the proposed demilitarised zones; but once that withdrawal was complete it could be agreed that the Task Force would be redeployed to normal duties, which would of course not preclude it from proceeding to or remaining in the South Atlantic if the Government so wished.

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Although the concept of halting the Task Force did not feature in the draft which Mr Haig had tabled, some of his advisers clearly thought of this as an essential quid pro quo for Argentine military withdrawal from the Islands; on the other hand, Mr Haig had himself made clear that he had welcomed the decision to despatch the Task Force, and that its approach and the European Community's decision on economic sanctions were the two most powerful factors influencing the Argentine Government in favour of a negotiated settlement including withdrawal. Agreement should if possible be reached with Mr Haig in the course of the day, so that he could return immediately to Buenos Aires for further negotiations there.

The Sub-Committee -

1. Took note that the Prime Minister would continue the negotiations with Mr Haig on the basis indicated in her summing up.
2. Invited the Secretary of State for Defence to suspend the arrangements provisionally being made for them to be given a military briefing by the Chiefs of Staff on 13 April.

Cabinet Office

13 April 1982

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