

SUBJECT

ex Hurd

CONFIDENTIAL

NOTE OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE PRESIDENT
OF FRANCE AT LUNCH AT 10 DOWNING STREET ON 17 MAY 1982

Present

The Prime Minister	President Mitterrand
The Rt. Hon Douglas Hurd	M. Mauroy
Sir Robert Armstrong	M. Attali
Sir John Fretwell	M. Margerie
Mr. John Coles	M. Vedrine
Interpreter	M. Vauzelle Interpreter

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After a brief exchange on the current Middle Eastern situation, President Mitterrand asked whether the Prime Minister could describe the current situation in the South Atlantic.

The Prime Minister said that things were very difficult. It was now six weeks since the adoption of Security Council Resolution 502, since when more and more equipment had been piled on to the Islands. We had examined six different sets of peace proposals, but there had been no change in the Argentine attitude. They wanted sovereignty as the price for withdrawal. We would now make one last serious attempt in New York. The Secretary General was a man of great integrity but he could not achieve the impossible.

President Mitterrand said that once Argentina had invaded and Britain had taken the decision to send the Task Force, events were constrained by logic. It was difficult for diplomacy to achieve anything. He had taken his decision to support Britain in full awareness of this and in full recognition of the likely consequences for France's relations with Latin America.

The Prime Minister said that, apart from twenty permanent Argentine residents, the rest of the Falklands population were

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of British descent, some of several generations. They did not want Argentinian rule. Independence would be difficult without some guarantee of security. A UN guarantee, or a multi-national one as in Sinai, might be possible. The Falklands and South Georgia were of great strategic importance - which explained their role in two world wars. But the Falklands population could not agree to Argentinian rule. How could they tolerate people like Captain Astiz, in whom France had expressed interest?

President Mitterrand said that negotiations had made no progress since the Argentine invasion. He did not want a solution by force but he did not see how this could be avoided. He hoped war need not be prolonged. The Prime Minister said that we, too, did not want a solution by force. But the UN Resolution would never produce a solution. Galtieri had said over the weekend that he was prepared to sacrifice 40,000 lives. She felt revulsion at this statement. President Mitterrand said the only surprising thing was that Galtieri put the figure as low as 40,000. The Prime Minister said that a person like that could not be allowed to succeed. If he did, there would be serious implications for countries like Belize, Guyana and Gibraltar. France had a number of territories which would also be at risk.

President Mitterrand said that he did not question the United Kingdom's actions. No alternative was available. He believed the United Kingdom would proceed to a landing and the recovery of the Islands, though he was not asking for confirmation of this. However, when the balance of forces had been changed, it would be important to undertake very active diplomacy. When he had supported the British decision he had not doubted that we would pursue the matter to the end. And if we denied that now, he would not believe us. The Prime Minister said that the Task Force had its objectives. It was difficult to see how these could now be achieved by diplomacy. President Mitterrand said that what worried him was the situation which might follow the use of force. He

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took it as read that we would occupy the Islands militarily. But we should then have to give priority to diplomatic action. There was bound to be damage to relations between the United Kingdom and Latin America and Europe and Latin America. We should make a distinction between our conflict with Argentina and Western policy towards Latin America as a whole. Latin America would learn the lesson that it could not play games with the United Kingdom, but it must know as soon as possible that the United Kingdom was not an enemy. The Prime Minister commented that this was good advice. In due course we should have to mend fences.

President Mitterrand said that if he was a President of a Latin American country he would be more worried about the United States than about the Soviet Union. The United States must learn not to confuse its interests in South America with the ambition to maintain a permanent protectorate over it. The Russians had profited from Cuba and would do so now from the situation in the South Atlantic.

The Prime Minister said that she hoped that the Pope would still visit the United Kingdom at the end of May but she understood that there was now some doubt, largely because 50 per cent of Roman Catholics lived in Latin America. She was most anxious that the Pope should maintain his plan. If it would help, she would cancel all Government involvement in the visit. President Mitterrand said that he could not answer for the Pope, but the difference between the present situation and the time when the visit was arranged was that there was now a war and the Pope had to take account of that.

A.J.C.