

80. Telegram From Secretary of State Haig to the Department of State¹

London, April 13, 1982, 0929Z

Secto 5078. For S/S–Bremer only. Secretary's Meeting With Prime Minister Thatcher April 8: Falkland Islands Crisis. Ref: London 7892.²

Following is cleared memcon of Secretary's April 8 meeting which replaces draft contained in London 7892.

1. Secret–Entire text.

2. The Secretary began by meeting at 6:00 p.m. April 8 at No. 10 Downing Street with Prime Minister Thatcher to discuss the Falkland Islands crisis. Also present were Foreign Secretary Francis Pym, Private Secretary John Coles and U.S. Charge Edward Streater.

3. The Prime Minister welcomed the Secretary and thanked him for the April 7 message she had received.³

4. She said the U.K. had been having good talks with Argentina and was extremely surprised by the actions of that government. No one had anticipated them. After the Secretary said that the U.S., too, was surprised, the Prime Minister said Carrington had been in Israel and thus out of touch. The only hope of stopping the Argentines was through President Reagan's good offices. She was most grateful for his action. The mood in Britain was very deeply felt, she said, because our sovereign territory was involved and we were unable to defend it. The discussion in Parliament was the most difficult she had seen in 25 years. A majority felt Britain had been humiliated and had betrayed the people of the Falklands. The debate left no doubt about the depth of feeling in the country. As she informed President Reagan,⁴ she had dispatched submarines, put the fleet on alert and announced it would sail. The debate yesterday had been sombre, but the government had full support. Moreover, hope had been expressed that the situation could be resolved by diplomatic means. There is total determination among the British to use military strength if needed. John Nott's speech⁵ had been good and Britain had not put a foot wrong in international law.

¹ Source: Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, [no film number]. Secret; Immediate; Nodis. Sent for information Immediate to London.

² In telegram 7892 from London, April 10, the Embassy transmitted to Buenos Aires an earlier, uncleared version of the April 8 memorandum of conversation. (Department of State, Central Foreign Policy File, N820003-0387)

³ Not found.

⁴ See Document 68.

⁵ See Document 78.

5. The Prime Minister continued that she had been heartened by the support from elsewhere. Mitterand had telephoned and agreed to get support from Togo and Zaire. The King of Jordan had supported Britain in the UN as well. Schmidt had called to express his support, and had said that unprovoked aggression if not turned back could lead to problems everywhere there are border disputes. Unless we stop the Argentines from succeeding, we are all vulnerable. Muldoon of New Zealand and Fraser of Australia also had expressed support and Fraser had cut off Argentine trade.

6. The Prime Minister recalled the lengthy negotiations with Argentina that had been held on the basis that no negotiations could take place unless it was with the agreement of the Islanders and no scheme would be put forward that was unacceptable to the Islanders.

7. The Prime Minister made clear her view that it was impossible to be neutral in the face of unprovoked aggression. In reviewing the bidding, she said the fleet was en route, an exclusion zone has been established, yet Britain hopes for a diplomatic solution. However, there could be no negotiations unless Argentina leaves the Islands. Unprovoked aggression does not change legal status. She said Britain sought to restore British administration to the Falklands and cannot negotiate under duress and without the participation of the Islanders. She noted that concern had been stirred by statements from Washington about not taking sides. These were off the cuff and not carefully conceived remarks. At the same time, she expressed appreciation for U.S. cooperation in intelligence matters and in the use of Ascension Island.

8. The Secretary said that he was certain the Prime Minister knew where the President stood. We are not impartial. Certainly we were not impartial on the UN resolution and the President was not impartial in his telephone call to Galtieri.⁶ He said he did not need to elaborate President Reagan's feelings towards the Prime Minister. The special friendship of the Prime Minister over fifteen months was deeply appreciated; there is no issue on which the Prime Minister had not backed the U.S.

9. The Secretary said that we face a critical common problem: "We must do all we can to strengthen you and your government."

10. Having analyzed the situation very carefully, the Secretary said he thought there had been an intelligence failure. The only information available was about submarine reconnaissance by the Argentines. When Henderson had provided sensitive intelligence, the Secretary had concluded that there had been a failure of concentration rather than management. The Secretary also said that delays had been manip-

⁶ See Document 41.

ulated in Buenos Aires. For example, the Argentines had stonewalled on the issue of sovereignty. Moreover, the President had been kept waiting when he telephoned to speak to Galtieri. When the President was able to get in touch with the President of Argentina, Galtieri used the same talking points earlier used by the GOA with our Ambassador to Argentina.⁷ In the Secretary's view the GOA operation had been planned for months.

11. The Secretary said we were watching the Argentine situation closely. The Argentines had been arrogantly confident that the U.K. would not be able to challenge the invasion and thus they were not deterred. The Secretary also observed that the Soviets were beginning to position themselves for mischief. At the same time, he said that the incumbent President of Argentina is in some jeopardy and would be followed by someone more intransigent if a change of government occurred in Argentina as a result of this crisis. The Argentine Foreign Minister had told the Secretary that everything was negotiable.⁸ The Secretary had responded that he would not go to Buenos Aires if he were going to be told the same things as previously. The Argentine Foreign Minister had made it clear he wanted the Secretary to come. The Secretary said we would not accept a change in status quo by force. The Secretary continued, we have a window now, we believe. When the British fleet reaches the 50th parallel it will become an emotional issue in both U.K. and Argentina⁹ and progress thereafter will be difficult. Similarly, the OAS, with its Third World problems, will not be objective when it meets and ultimately will form an anti-colonialist consensus. The Secretary recalled that the Argentine Foreign Minister had said he had two options: the OAS and the Soviet Union, and would use them. While he didn't want to overdramatize, the Argentines would be strengthened in their macho by the OAS. Even in the U.K. he said, the situation will become more difficult with heavy expenditures of resources.

12. The Secretary said he viewed the next 72 hours as very important in Argentina. While we need to demand withdrawal and achieve it, we need to do it by Monday (4/12/82). London was chosen to visit first because the British are our closest friends and allies and we wished to start discussions with them; it was pointless to go to Buenos Aires

⁷ See Document 37.

⁸ For a summary of Haig's April 6 meeting with Costa Mendez, see Document 73.

⁹ On April 8, Shlaudeman reported that "feelings are running high" in the Argentine Navy and that the Embassy was "getting ultra-tough sounds" from it, "including statements that the Secretary should not come here because all he will be doing is carrying the campaign of pressure and disinformation." (Telegram 2103 from Buenos Aires, April 8; Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Country File, Latin America/Central, Argentina (04/06/1982-04/10/1982))

first and listen to macho rhetoric without a fundamental feel for Britain's limits. And the Secretary said he wanted to be able to say how strong U.S. views are. He hoped to be able to force a withdrawal. He added, "We agree with what you are doing, although we want to avoid a war."

13. The Prime Minister said that the current effort was "more important than us." "We are rolling back the tide of socialism," she said. Moreover our success will be important to France, Latin America and the Caribbean. She recalled that Britain had had experience with appeasement and notions of "peace with honor." It comes to a point, she said, where one cannot compromise. She opined that the Soviets were afraid of the U.S. getting involved as it is. In her view, the Soviets are stretched and it would surprise her if they got involved.

14. The Secretary said that he did not fear a major U.S. involvement, but if the British carried out a military action he could envisage Soviet military involvement. He foresaw that the British could succeed in military terms in a limited way. However, the Argentines would go into port and land-based air would become a problem. The Prime Minister said that her government was correct and law-abiding and needed to give timely notice on the exclusion zone. She recalled that the whole Argentine effort was minutely planned down to getting the names of all the British marines. She recalled that the Argentines knew the names of the five missing marines. Doubtless the 20 Argentines on the island were involved. It was amazing there had been no intelligence on their activities. The Argentine commander on the Island had said the U.K. will do nothing. We had tried to negotiate in a civilized way. Clearly, there was a difference of view between the politicians and the military in Argentina. However, we were looking at constructive proposals in our negotiations in New York which were friendly. Pym suggested that the Argentines had been carried away in a macho way. Galtieri had taken care of his predecessor, but apparently he was less tough than the navy chiefs.

15. The Secretary asked what pressures Britain could bring to bear, noting that Europe knows that the reputation of the West is at stake. The U.S. had stopped military exports. The Prime Minister responded that the Argentines can feed themselves; however, they have no credit worthiness left. It will be difficult for them to borrow more on the Euro dollar market. They miscalculated in her view and she said she wanted to solve the problem by democratic means. To date Britain was getting a lot of help because most realized that the West is on trial.

16. In response to the Prime Minister's questions about Galtieri, the Secretary said he is reputed to be a religious man and something of a drinker. He had a reputation as well for being a "tough guy" and a poker player. That is why there may be a window now. He will up

the ante if forced and he will continue the struggle even if he won't survive. His fleet can be damaged severely and the Islands put in a cocoon. But landing on the big Island would be very costly and it will put the population in jeopardy. In the final analysis once engagement starts it will become an increasingly difficult burden to protect principle. People will begin to ask questions like why they are making such a sacrifice for a thousand sheep herders. U.S. opinion now supports the principled position Britain has taken but we cannot be sure it will last too long if the issue is not settled.

17. The Prime Minister said there is no border in the Falklands; the situation is more like Malaysia than Vietnam.

18. The Secretary said he wanted to find some approach that protected principle and achieved a success before there is a backlash. The Thatcher government had to be strengthened and if so, we will all come out better. The Prime Minister emphasized that this could happen after withdrawal of Argentine forces from the Islands. She noted that the Islands are short of water, cold, and that there is nothing but sheep to eat. The Secretary said the hope was to work for withdrawal in such a way that Galtieri is not toppled and replaced by someone more rigid. He emphasized withdrawal of military and security related forces; to get that step he thought the Argentines need to be convinced that they are not losing face in the process. At the same time, there must be a victory for principle. The Prime Minister thought these approaches contradictory.

19. The Secretary outlined a three-step approach involving withdrawal of forces, restoration of administration and negotiations on next steps. The topic of sovereignty would arise. The Prime Minister emphasized that the U.K. is the sovereign, the people were free before and clearly gave allegiance to the crown under law. The Secretary saw the need to avoid a priori judgements; it was necessary to go back to negotiations. The Prime Minister said this was very dangerous ground with public opinion. British administration must be restored: we cannot agree that a dictator can change that by force. Britain negotiated politely. The Argentines to the British are neo-imperialists. Forces must be withdrawn and pressure must be applied to that end. After withdrawal we could take up where we left off. The Secretary said that if Britain went that route, force will be required and there will be war. The Prime Minister replied that it will be a great tragedy if force is required. Britain is worried about its people there.

20. The Secretary said that if in the future freedom of choice can be assured and if the forces are withdrawn as a first step and if change in local authority is brought about immediately some progress might be possible. The Prime Minister said she would not negotiate under duress. She was unable even to have access to the Falklanders now.

She was pledged to the House of Commons, as are Foreign Secretary Pym and Minister of Defence John Nott. The Secretary said he was not suggesting negotiating under duress. He had in mind the return of the British presence. In addition he envisaged a U.S. and Canadian presence. The Prime Minister said she was pledged to restore British administration and to effective restoration of sovereignty. She believed the Secretary's proposal violated these principles. The Secretary said he saw withdrawal of the Argentine forces and the subsequent application of a temporary arrangement. Thatcher insisted the people have a right to stay on the Islands. The Secretary replied that was what he was seeking to achieve in conformity with the UN Charter. The Prime Minister said rights under the UN Charter were removed by force. She indicated the Secretary was suggesting the Argentines get by force what they failed to get before. The Secretary said his intention was to achieve withdrawal of the force, restoration of an administration that could guarantee the freedom of the people while negotiations go on. The Prime Minister said the people had everything they wanted before. She sought withdrawal and restoration of British administration—which merged with sovereignty. Then there could be negotiations. As a guardian of the Islanders' rights, she cannot put up something these people turned down, she said. Pym said preserving the right of self-determination was involved. The Secretary said one must find a way on the issue of administration. If we insist on withdrawal and go back to the status quo ante the consequences will be conflict. The Prime Minister said that this approach would mean the Venezuelans can go into Guyana, the Soviets into Berlin and the Argentines into Chile. Is that the message we want to give the world, she asked. The Secretary said principles would be preserved; but the only way to get the problem turned around in the short term is to achieve an interim arrangement on authority in the Island.

21. Pym asked if the Secretary envisaged a return to U.K. administration and the Prime Minister said that issue could not be put in jeopardy. She added that she needed to demonstrate that she was not operating under duress at the interim stage. The Secretary recalled that the process previously underway included proposals for leasing that would have been a direct concession of sovereignty. The Prime Minister recalled that leasing had never been proposed to the Argentines. The Secretary said that it had been widely discussed and all were aware of it. The Secretary asked what happened if we don't find a solution and conflict develops. The Prime Minister said it had developed and was initiated by the Argentines. The first principle of America, she said, is the right to use force to recover your own home. Once British administration is restored of course Britain will negotiate. The Argentines flouted every canon of law. Our friends agree. She did not want

a shot to be fired. But she could not tolerate their getting by force what they failed to get otherwise.

22. The meeting adjourned for dinner.¹⁰

Haig

¹⁰ For a record of the April 8 dinner meeting between Haig and Thatcher, see Document 81.