

103. Transcript of a Telephone Conversation Between Secretary of State Haig and British Prime Minister Thatcher¹

London, April 13, 1982, 1:20–1:24 a.m.

H: Madame Prime Minister, I am terribly sorry to bother you at this hour.

T: It's perfectly all right.

H: I just finished about an hour of open conversation with this Foreign Minister.² He is clearly dissembling and quibbling. On the one hand, he says he has to have sovereignty or control of the Island, and on the other, he says go on with the negotiations—these are principles and we can craft words. I think he is under a firm mandate from his President. I told him I thought I should sleep on it, and he should and that he should talk to his President. I don't think we should do anything without the two of us getting together. One of the things which worries me is it will appear that your position today has caused this problem. I think it would build problems for you here and everywhere else. I would intend to tell the press tonight that I have been on the phone with Buenos Aires; a complication has developed at that end and the picture still is unclear. We hope to have it clarified tomorrow and we will have more for them tomorrow. I think if we don't put that twist on it, it will turn negatively here.

T: I watched television news and they reported it very glumly indeed.

H: I think that is justified. I think they are giving an ultimatum. I told them we couldn't accept it. I think the two of us should meet in the morning before I talk with him again. He now says this paper is official which was unofficial.³

T: Did he send you a paper or give you one before.

H: He handed to me as I got on the plane and said these were his own thoughts. Now they have become rigid alternatives.

T: What time would you like to come?

H: 9:00 or 9:30?

¹ Source: Department of State, Executive Secretariat, Files of Alexander M. Haig, Jr., 1981–1981, Lot 82D370, (2) Falklands Crisis—1982. Secret; Nodis. Haig was speaking from his suite at the Churchill Hotel.

² See Document 101.

³ See footnote 5, Document 92.

T: 9:00 am is perfectly all right.⁴ What a sad thing!

H: I fear with the Peronista mood they have created a problem and it is running away with them.

T: We will just hope for the best. I will call Francis.

H: I'll see you in the morning; I called Francis before I called you.⁵

⁴ No memorandum of conversation of Haig's meeting with Thatcher on the morning of April 13 has been found. In her memoirs, Thatcher wrote that the U.S. and U.K. teams met "first thing" that day. "By this stage it was becoming obvious that the proposals the Americans had presented to us the previous day had no measure of Argentine approval. In fact, the status of all these proposals was doubtful. The more closely I questioned Al Haig on this point, the more uncertain it became. Since these proposals had not been agreed by the Argentinians, even if we accepted them, they might therefore not form the basis of a settlement." Thatcher continued: "This fact was made painfully clear at the meeting that morning when Mr Haig handed us a document embodying five points which he described as essential to the Argentine position. As he himself said, the practical effect of the Argentine tactics was to buy time. I always thought that this was their main purpose in negotiating. I was becoming impatient with all this. I said this was essentially an issue of dictatorship versus democracy. Galtieri wanted to be able to claim victory by force of arms. The question now was whether he could be diverted from his course by economic sanctions or, as I suspected all along, only by military force. Mr Haig replied that he had made it abundantly clear to Argentina that if a conflict developed the United States would side with Britain. But did he wish to bring negotiations to an end today? He could say publicly that he was suspending his own efforts, making it clear that this was due to Argentine intransigence. But if he did so other less helpful people might try to intervene. I was keenly aware of that and I also felt that public opinion here required us not to give up on negotiations yet." (Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 198)

⁵ See Document 102.