

144. Transcript of a Telephone Conversation Between President Reagan and British Prime Minister Thatcher¹

April 17, 1982, 2:30–2:34 p.m.

PARTICIPANTS

The President (Camp David)

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (London)

R: Margaret, yes. Listen, I know . . . I understand you've just gotten back to 10 Downing,² and I'm a little better off—I'm up at Camp David. But, listen, I wanted to call you about what's been going on, and when I first started to call today, I was a little more discouraged and now,

¹ Source: Reagan Library, Executive Secretariat, NSC Subject File, Memorandums of Conversation—President Reagan (April 1982). Top Secret. In his personal diary entry for April 17, Reagan wrote: "Afternoon interrupted by phone calls—Bill Clark—re the Falkland situation. Al H. is there and as of noon things looked hopeless. I called Margaret Thatcher to tell her I'd cabled him to return home if there was no break in the Argentine position." (Reagan, *Diaries*, p. 124)

² In her memoirs, Thatcher recalled that she had returned to her office at Number 10 Downing Street from the Prime Minister's official country residence, Chequers, to receive the President's call due to "technical problems" with the direct line from the latter. She added: "I was glad to go over the issues with the President. I was gladder still that he agreed that it would not be reasonable to ask us to move further towards the Argentine position. Al Haig had found the Argentinians even more impossible than on his first visit. The White House had instructed him to tell the Junta that if they persisted in their intransigence this would lead to a breakdown of talks and the US Administration would make clear who was to blame." (Thatcher, *Downing Street Years*, p. 202)

I don't know, because Al is still in meetings; and I wanted to tell you that I had sent him a message that if, there was no break down there, I was calling him home.³ And maybe that message has had something to do with the length of the meetings now that are going on. But I also wanted to tell you that I know how far you've gone and how much you've compromised in an effort to settle this peacefully, and I don't think you should be asked to go any further than you have.

M: That's very kind of you, because when Al left here Tuesday,⁴ he had a workable and fair compromise, undoubtedly. He worked extremely hard for it. He's a very good negotiator, and we think he's done marvelously. And we had hoped that it would be successful. But he's still talking, is he?

R: Yes. We had expected him on the way home at the way things sounded earlier this morning, but the latest word is the meetings are still continuing. It seems that President Galtieri has been more reasonable, but then he gets back with the Junta, and things seem to harden up.

M: Yes, I understand that with Al before, that he can get Galtieri down to something reasonable, but of course Al doesn't talk to the Junta, and they then go back on everything, you see. But you sent the message earlier, Ron, that if the talks broke down there, that Al would come home? Have I got that right?

R: Yes, I asked him to come home, because, as I say, if, at the stage they were, and if there is not some progress on this proposal that he went down there with, I just don't feel that there's any more we could ask of you unless something, unless they inject something new, then, that you might be interested in. But I also wanted you to know that we're sympathetic to what you're going through, and I hope you realize that we are all deeply interested in keeping this great relationship that our two countries have had.

M: That's very good of you—so are we. We want to keep it as well, and thank you very much for phoning and letting me know the positions. I'm relieved, because we heard the talks had broken down and then that they were on again, and I just hope that they will be successful.

R: Oh, I do too, and God bless you, and let's just both keep praying.

M: God bless. Thank you very much for phoning, Ron, and love to Nancy.

R: I certainly shall. All right. Good-bye.

³ See Document 140.

⁴ April 13.