

162. Message From British Foreign Secretary Pym to Secretary of State Haig¹

London, April 21, 1982

Begins:

In preparation for our talks tomorrow² I am asking Nicko Henderson to give you the amendments to the Buenos Aires text³ which the Prime Minister and I consider essential at first sight. He will be conveying one or two further points to which we attach importance.

As background to our meeting it might be useful for you to have the following summary of the reasons why the latest draft would be far more difficult for Britain to consider accepting than the version which we discussed earlier:⁴

A. WITHDRAWAL

The proposed arrangements are unequal and heavily favour Argentina, despite her being the aggressor. For the second week after signature of the agreement Argentina would have several thousand troops with all their equipment in the Falkland Islands, while the nearest British forces (our submarines) would be several hours distant. Within fifteen days the provision that British forces should return to their usual operating bases or areas would apparently exclude most possible deployments in the South Atlantic whereas the Argentines would be only about 200 miles away.

B. ADMINISTRATION

To have three nominees of the Argentine Government in the Councils in the Falklands would be undemocratic in the case of the legislative council and disproportionate in the case of the Executive Council. In effect, Government would be shared between Britain and Argentina at the Administrative level, as well as (with the United States) in the special Interim Authority. British administration would thus be re-established to a far lesser degree than under the earlier draft.

¹ Source: Department of State, Executive Secretariat, S/S Special Handling Restrictions Memos 1979–1983, Lot 96D262, ES Sensitive April 20–23 1982. UK Confidential. The British Embassy in Washington sent the message to Haig under an April 21 covering note from Henderson. According to an April 21 memorandum from Eagleburger to Haig, Thomas delivered Pym's message to the Department the evening of April 21. In the same memorandum, Eagleburger wrote that Pym had "sent word" that he wished to have a "scene setting discussion" with Haig when they met the following day as well as a discussion of a U.S. "military guarantee" to the United Kingdom and "the absolute need to maintain maximum security possible about British military plans." (Ibid.)

² See Document 163.

³ See Document 152.

⁴ See Document 112.

C. ECONOMIC SANCTIONS

The new draft would have these lifted before the completion of Argentinian withdrawal, thus contradicting the principle that withdrawal in accordance with the UN resolution is the first requirement.

D. RELATIONS WITH THE MAINLAND

The latest draft opens up the possibility, if not the probability, of an influx of Argentine people and businesses, combined with strong encouragement to the Islanders to leave. Britain would apparently still have the right to block proposals in this field from the special Interim Authority, but the latest draft independently concedes the principle of facilitating contacts between the Islands and Argentina.

E. FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS

The new text would exclude re-establishment of the status quo ante the invasion from the list of possible outcomes of negotiations. This does not preserve the fundamental principle that the islanders must choose their own future. Here too Britain would nominally be free to refuse agreement to any outcome of the negotiations which the islanders did not accept. But there is a bias in the relevant paragraph which would greatly restrict our freedom to press for any outcome not involving early transfer of sovereignty to Argentina.

All in all, I think I was right to tell my colleagues in the Ten yesterday that the general effect of the latest draft—even presupposing Argentine goodwill, which in our eyes is far from obvious—would be that Argentine withdrawal would be delayed, the Argentine voice in the administration of the islands would be disproportionate, Argentine influence and pressure in the islands would be given free rein, and future negotiations would be organised in a way which could only prejudice the principles of sovereignty and self-determination. The result would be that in practice the islanders would face the choice between absorption into Argentina or abandonment of the islands which have been their home in most cases for a [omission in the original].

I do not underestimate the difficulty of getting the Argentinians to accept our amendments. But I thought I should leave you in no doubt about the gap which I see between their present demands and what we can accept.

I much look forward to our meeting tomorrow and to all that I hope will come out of it—including something useful to you in the OAS context, on which I was grateful for your latest message.⁵

Ends.

⁵ See Document 154.

Attachment

Paper Prepared by the British Government⁶

London, undated

ESSENTIAL AMENDMENTS

Begins:

Paragraph 2.1: Delete "rescind" and substitute "suspend enforcement of".

Paragraph 2.2.1 (second sentence): Delete and substitute the following:
"Within the same time period the United Kingdom naval task force will stand off at a distance of at least 150 miles from any of the two co-ordinate points."

Paragraph 2.2.2.

(a) Re-draft first sentence as follows:

"Within fifteen days from the date of this agreement, Argentina and the United Kingdom shall have removed all their forces, equipment and armaments from the zones".

(b) Re-draft second sentence as follows:

"Thereafter, the UK naval task force and submarines shall revert to their normal duties."

Paragraph 4: Delete "From the date of this agreement, steps" and substitute "On completion of the steps specified in paragraphs 2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 above, the two Governments shall take measures to terminate . . ."

Second sentence: Delete "without delay" and insert "at the same time" and "shall".

Paragraph 5: Add "Each representative may be supported by a staff of not more than ten persons".

Paragraph 6 (A): Delete the second sentence and substitute: "The traditional local administration shall be re-established, including the executive and legislative councils, each of which shall be enlarged to include one representative of the Argentine population resident on the Islands to be nominated by the special interim authority."

Paragraph 6 (A): Delete third sentence.

Paragraph 7 (A): Delete and substitute:

⁶ UK Secret.

“Pending a definitive settlement, the special interim authority shall make proposals to the two Governments to facilitate and promote travel, transportation, communications (including the movement of persons) and trade between the mainland and the Islands. Such proposals shall simultaneously be transmitted to the executive and legislative councils for their views. The two Governments undertake to respond as soon as possible to such proposals. The special interim authority shall monitor the implementation of all such proposals agreed by the two Governments”.

Paragraph 7 (B): Delete “teaching” and “property”. Clarification is required of the meaning of the phrase “on an equal basis”. Pending such clarification, a reserve is put on this phrase.

Paragraph 8 (A): Delete and substitute:

“December 31, 1982, will conclude the interim period during which the signatories shall negotiate mutually agreed conditions for the definitive status of each of the three groups of islands in accordance with the purposes and principles of the charter of the United Nations and bearing in mind relevant General Assembly resolutions. The negotiations shall begin within fifteen days of the signature of the present agreement”.

Ends.