

248. Memorandum From the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs (Eagleburger) to Secretary of State Haig<sup>1</sup>

Washington, May 11, 1982

Mr. Secretary:

SUBJECT

Falkland Crisis

It comes as no surprise that the UN initiative is running aground. Here are some thoughts on the consequences and on how we should proceed.

The Argentines have now had three clear opportunities to settle, and their position is as unacceptable as ever. They wouldn't settle before hostilities; they wouldn't settle in the wake of military setbacks (South Georgia, the *Belgrano*); and they are no more flexible now that they have shown they can hold their own militarily (with the destruction of the *Sheffield*). We have to conclude that only a major setback—and quite likely not even that—will cause them to negotiate in earnest. The British have surely reached this conclusion.

This has several implications:

- A major UK military move is likely. We would not be able to restrain HMG—through direct pressure, a new peace initiative or both—even if we wanted to do so.

- The British may present us with more difficult requests as hostilities become more severe.

- A new peace proposal by Peru, the UN, the US or any other party will suffer the same fate as the others, absent a major change in the military situation.

- As fighting escalates, pressures for a straight ceasefire will mount, putting the UK and its supporters, especially us, on the defensive.

- European support for the British may unravel quickly.

In view of these prospects, we should:

- Warn the British not to be the first to break off the UN talks. Those talks are the best protection against a major UN push for a ceasefire, and condemnation of British military action will be worse if they first cut off the SYG's effort.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Department of State, Executive Secretariat, S/S Special Handling Restrictions Memos 1979–1983, Lot 96D262, ES Sensitive May 6–18 1982. Secret; Sensitive.

<sup>2</sup> Eagleburger placed a vertical line in the left-hand margin next to this point and wrote: "You've already done this."

- Urge other Allies to support the UK even if things get nastier. Western cohesion is being tested; moreover, our position will be less exposed if others maintain support for London.<sup>3</sup>

- Engage the British now in a discussion of how to proceed after a major military success. It is important to get through to them that they must be at least as forthcoming on settlement terms after success as they are now or there will be no settlement at all. In this context, we should warn the British not to expect us to relieve them of their South Atlantic burden if there is no agreement.

- Do not launch a new US initiative,<sup>4</sup> even with some other party. It would be doomed. If the Argentines, or someone on their behalf, seek our involvement, we'll have to consider it. But we should not rush to fill a vacuum, or let the British push us into another futile effort simply to provide political cover for their military action.

- Without any appearance of US orchestration, we should urge those with any influence in Buenos Aires (Peru, Brazil, Spain) to warn the Argentines that they now have their last chance for a reasonable settlement before catastrophe.

I would like a chance to discuss these ideas before you leave.<sup>5</sup>

**Lawrence S. Eagleburger<sup>6</sup>**

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<sup>3</sup> Eagleburger placed a vertical line in the left-hand margin next to this point and wrote: "Best done in the NATO mtg."

<sup>4</sup> Eagleburger drew an asterisk after this word, which corresponds to a notation he wrote at the bottom of the page: "But be prepared to come back in when asked—as I believe you will be! LSE."

<sup>5</sup> Reference is to Haig's travels to Turkey May 13–15 and Greece May 15–16, prior to attending a NATO Ministerial Meeting in Luxembourg May 16–18.

<sup>6</sup> Eagleburger initialed "LSE" above his typed signature.